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The Two Towers

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58th year of publication

Federal government examines same-sex marriage

Alan Doerksen

OTTAWA – Should the Canadian government legalize and sanction same-sex marriage? That's a question federal Minister of Justice Martin Cauchon is looking at seriously.

In November, Cauchon delivered a discussion paper on marriage and the legal recognition of same-sex unions to Andy Scott, Chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. Cauchon also publicly released the discussion paper, reports the Justice Department. The Minister intends to ask the Committee to study this issue, and to hear from Canadians about it.

COURTESY DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE CANADA

Justice Minister Martin Cauchon

"I believe strongly that Canadians as a society should be encouraged to thoroughly consider, in an open and respectful way, what all of the implications of either maintaining or changing the opposite-sex legal requirement for marriage in Canada might be," Cauchon asserted. He has asked Scott and his committee to study possible policy approaches to this issue, to hear from Canadians and to provide him with recommendations on possible legislative reform by early April 2003.

The discussion paper provides information about legal recognition of same-sex unions, including public opinion research information and a survey of what the provinces, territories and other countries are doing to legally recognize conjugal relationships outside of marriage, including same-sex. It also provides an overview of possible approaches that could be taken by the government and what the implications of each could be.

Three court challenges

Currently, there are three challenges before the courts — in British Columbia, Quebec and Ontario — which raise the question of whether the opposite-sex requirement for marriage is constitutional.

In fall 2001, the B.C. Supreme Court upheld the opposite-sex requirement of marriage, and stated that Parliament does not have the constitutional authority to alter the opposite-sex meaning of marriage. That decision is under appeal, and is expected to be heard by the B.C. Court of Appeal in February.

But the courts of Ontario and Quebec took an opposite approach. Last July, the Ontario Divisional Court declared that the opposite-sex requirement of marriage was a breach of constitutional equality guarantees for gay and lesbians, and gave Parliament two years to address this issue. If Parliament fails to do so, the court

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Three Baptist hospital staff killed in Yemen

(From reports by Barbara G. Baker of Compass News and Baptist Press)

ISTANBUL, Turkey — Three American staff of the Jibla Baptist Hospital in southern Yemen were shot to death and another seriously wounded on the hospital compound on the morning of Dec. 30 by a lone Yemeni gunman.

The three medical personnel killed on the spot were hospital administrator William E. Koehn, 60; obstetrician Dr. Martha C. Myers, 57; and purchasing agent Kathleen A. Gariety, 53. Both Koehn and Myers had served in the Southern Baptist mission hospital for 24 years or more and Gariety for the past 10 years.

BAPTIST PRESS NEWS PHOTOS (2)

Dr. Martha Myers (above left) and hospital administrator William Koehn (at right, seated) were two victims of a gunman at the Jibla Baptist Hospital in southern Yemen.

Pharmacist shot, but recovering

The attack occurred about 8:30 a.m., at the beginning of the hospital work day. Without warning an armed attacker burst into a room where the three Americans were meeting, shooting them all in the head. The gunman then ran into the pharmacy, where he cornered pharmacist Donald Caswell, 49, and shot him twice in the abdomen.

After surgery in which two bullets were removed, Caswell was reported stable and expected to recover from his injuries.

According to Associated Press reports, the assailant had smuggled a semiautomatic rifle past guards as he entered the hospital compound, cradling the gun in his arms to resemble a small child. He reportedly got past the gate, the Agence France Press (AFP) said, by saying he was "visiting a sick relative."

Gunman arrested

According to Yemen's official news agency, Saba, Interior Ministry officials identified the assailant as Abed Abdul Razak Kamel. The gunman, who surrendered to the hospital's security staff and was put under arrest, was said to be a student in his 30s at the Al-Iman University, known as a centre of Islamist militancy.

Local security sources told the press today that Kamel had told them he killed the hospital personnel to "cleanse his religion and get closer to Allah." The gunman allegedly confessed to membership in an Islamic jihad group, and that he had been trained in Afghanistan. One Yemeni official told Reuters that Kamel "said he shot the Americans because they were preaching Christianity in a Muslim country."

Koehn, from Arlington, Texas, is survived by his wife Marty and two grown daughters, Janelda and Samantha. Both Dr. Myers, from Montgomery, Alabama, and

See **YEMENI** *page 3...*

News

Government faces legal dilemmas on marriage

... continued from page 1

said, the common law in Ontario will automatically be changed to allow unions of "two persons."

Two years to address issue

Last September, the Quebec Superior Court made a similar "finding," and also gave Parliament two years to address this issue.

"If the law changes in Ontario and Quebec only, this would mean that the law of marriage would apply across Canada in different ways," says the discussion paper. "This outcome is exactly what the drafters of the original Constitution hoped to avoid – having some provinces and territories recognize a marriage that others do not."

But despite the dilemmas these court decisions raise, Cauchon does not see these challenges as a problem. In the discussion paper, he writes, "In my view, the roles of Parliament and the courts do not conflict, but complement each other. When the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was added to our Constitution in 1982, Parliament and the legislatures decided to make explicit the right of Canadians to go to court and challenge laws. At the same time, our Constitution makes it clear that Parliament has an essential role to play in deciding important social questions. Recent court decisions acknowledged the importance of this role, and we intend to responsibly play our part."

Possible legal snags

One problem area to face with this issue is that the Constitution divides power over marriage between the federal and provincial governments. Any changes made at the federal level would have consequences for the provinces, and could create serious legal snags.

For instance, one possible scenario would have Parliament pull out of "the marriage business" completely, and leave marriage to be dealt with by religions. To accomplish this, all legal effect of marriage could be removed at the federal level. Parliament could repeal all federal laws about marriage, and replace them with a registry for opposite-sex and same-sex couples. But this could create a legal mess, as the paper points out. "If provinces and territories decided instead to continue to exercise their constitutional jurisdiction to solemnize marriages, this approach would not work for two reasons. First, there would be no federal law setting out who can get married, meaning that either the Charter equality concerns would continue regarding the opposite-sex meaning of marriage..., or court decisions on the equality issue would have to fill the gap created in the federal law. Second, if provinces and territories continued to elect to solemnize marriages, there would no longer be any law on divorce that applied to these new marriages. Parliament could be criticized for not exercising its authority over divorce to protect vulnerable partners and children." Also, "As marriage would no longer exist in law, laws regarding the legal consequences of the breakdown of marriages on divorce would apply only to existing marriages."

Problems for clergy

Another possible problem the discussion paper points out is that if the status of marriage is changed, religious officials could be forced to marry gay and lesbian couples, even when it is against their beliefs. But both the recent Ontario and Quebec court decisions suggest clergy would not be required to do that, says the paper. One way of ensuring this would be to remove all legal effects of religious marriage and require each couple to have a civil marriage before it would be recognized in law.

But separating religious and secular marriage could be objectionable to many religions, which may want legal recognition for the marriages they perform, and whose members could feel marginalized without that recognition, suggests the paper.

The Committee on Justice and Human Rights will soon announce a process for hearing from Canadians about this contentious issue. In the meantime, the Justice Department encourages concerned people to write to their MPs and Senators — or to the Minister of Justice, at: Room 100, 284 Wellington St., Ottawa, ON, K1A 0H8, or by e-mail at: **marriage@justice.gc.ca**

Church coalitions take stands on same-sex marriage issue

Alan Doerksen

OTTAWA – As the Canadian government considers legalizing same-sex marriage, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) and Canadian Council of Churches are carefully examining this issue, with plans to present their ideas to the government.

EFC has already been involved directly with this issue as part of the Interfaith Coalition for Marriage and the Family, which has been an intervenor in recent court cases by other groups which are challenging the traditional meaning of marriage in Canada. And Janet Epp Buckingham, EFC's general legal counsel, has written to all MPs and to Justice Minister Martin Cauchon to express EFC's concerns about this issue.

Last summer, Buckingham wrote a letter to MPs urging them "to take the strongest possible action to encourage the Canadian government to appeal the recent Ontario [court] marriage ruling.... We are deeply concerned about the impact of the Ontario ruling on churches and religious institutions in Canada. The majority of marriages are solemnized by clergy in Canada. It is difficult to see this continuing if marriage is fundamentally redefined either by the courts or by Parliament."

Buckingham argued, "We are also concerned that the Ontario court rules that the institution of marriage must be redefined under the Charter. The Charter was not enacted to change the fundamental

COURTESY EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP OF CANADA

Janet Epp Buckingham, EFC's general legal counsel.

institutions of Canadian society.... Not one court in the world has ruled that the recognition of marriage as being between a man and a woman is unconstitutional or in violation of any norm of human rights."

The Ontario ruling also "flies in the face of Parliament's own pronouncements on marriage," contended Buckingham. "In June 1999, an all-party motion was passed in the House of Commons affirming the definition of marriage as being the union of one man and one woman."

EFC has urged MPs to supports that definition of marriage.

EFC intervenes in courts

EFC plans to continue intervening in three court cases — in Ontario, Quebec and B.C. (see related story) — dealing with the definition of marriage. The agency will also continue to be involved in Ottawa as the government debates this issue.

"It is clear that the Ontario case must be appealed," says Buckingham, in an EFC press release. "What we have with these two decisions is Parliament being told by the Ontario court to redefine marriage; and told by the British Columbia court that it cannot redefine marriage. Ultimately, we will need a ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada as to the institution of marriage."

Marriage existed before laws

In its Ontario court intervention, the Interfaith Coalition has pointed out that "'marriage' is not a legal construct. It is an institution that was not created by law. It is, rather, a pre-existing societal and primarily religious institution which has existed for millennia and has only been relatively recently recognized by legislation." The coalition argues that the applicants in the case "seek social recognition for the legitimacy of other forms of domestic partnership.... The applicants do not seek a review of existing legislation or law. 'Marriage' symbolizes social and religious acceptance of the legitimacy of relationships. The applicants want the courts to mandate social acceptance of a form of domestic partnership.... this is both unprecedented and beyond the role of courts conducting Charter review." As an alternative, suggests the coalition, "legislative response need

COURTESY CANADIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Mary Marrocco, associate secretary for CCC's Committee on Faith and Witness.

not redefine the institution of marriage, but, rather, can provide for equivalent registration benefits and recognition of other forms of domestic partnership."

For concerned people, EFC asks for prayer for members of the federal Justice Committee as they consider this issue; prayer for the upcoming cross-country hearings and that many Christ-like and well-prepared Christians would appear before the Committee during those hearings; as well as prayer for the lawyers for the Inter-Faith Coalition on Marriage and the Family, as they develop arguments for both the Ontario and B.C. cases. EFC also encourages people to write to MPs and to the Justice Minister about this issue.

A cautious approach

While EFC is taking an active stand in promoting the current definition of marriage, the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) is approaching the issue with careful consideration, since its member denominations hold a variety of views on the issue of same-sex marriage.

CCC's member churches have discussed this issue "quite intensely over the last few months," reports Mary Marrocco, associate secretary for CCC's Committee on Faith and Witness. "We worked hard to make a space for earnest conversation." Last July's Ontario court decision on this issue was a flashpoint for CCC to start seriously thinking about this, explains Marrocco. But CCC is not involved directly with those court cases, as EFC is.

Marrocco agrees with EFC that clergy are "feeling pressure" about this issue.

At this point, there is "definitely not" a consensus among CCC members about this issue. "It's a place where Christian traditions have different ideas," says Marrocco. But she notes, "We're trying to see what we can say in common. The government really can't make a decision without talking to us." But Marrocco does not expect a quick response from CCC members about this issue. "Trying to respond as quickly as is needed is the difficulty we have," she explains. CCC's member denominations have a variety of ways for deciding on what position to take on this topic. But CCC will continue to dialogue with its members about this important issue.

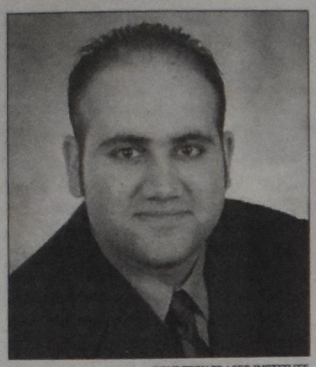
News/Politics

Fraser Institute offers prescription for better healthcare

Alan Doerksen

VANCOUVER – Canada's healthcare system is the most expensive among industrialized countries that have universal access, publicly-funded healthcare, according to the Fraser Institute. Instead of a rigidly public system, Canada should consider allowing a parallel private healthcare system, suggests the Vancouver-based conservative think-tank. The Institute is very critical of Roy Romanow's recent report on how to improve healthcare.

Last year, the Fraser Institute published a special issue of its magazine, *Fraser Forum*, which compared Canada's health system with those of other industrialized countries with publicly-funded healthcare which are members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Unlike the recent Romanow Report, which defends our present healthcare system and warns against privatization, the Institute is strongly supportive of further privatization.



COURTESY FRASER INSTITUTE

Nadeem Esmail, co-author of the Fraser Institute's health report.

In the Institute's report, authors Nadeem Esmail and Michael Walker (the Institute's executive director) conclude, "The comparative evidence is that the Canadian healthcare model is inferior to others in place in the OECD. It produces inferior access to physicians and technology, produces longer waiting times, is less successful in preventing death from preventable causes, and costs more than any of the other systems which have comparable objectives. The models that produce superior results and cost less than Canada's monopoly, single-insurer, single-provider system have: user fees; alternative, comprehensive, private insurance; and private hospitals. Canada should follow the example of these superior healthcare models."

Only Canada outlaws private system

The writers observe, "No country in the industrialized world other than Canada outlaws a private, parallel healthcare system for their citizens.... Looking at specific, treatable diseases, such as breast cancer, Canada ranks sixth. All of the comprehensive, universal access countries that do better than Canada have private healthcare alternatives, have some form of user fees at the point of access, and spend less than Canada after age-adjustment."

In banning user fees, Canada is in the minority of OECD countries, says the Institute. "More than two-thirds of the universal-access countries in the OECD also charge user fees for access to hospitals, general practitioners, or specialists – and in many cases, to all three."

Comparing age-adjusted healthcare spending in OECD countries, the Institute reports that Canada topped the list at 11.7 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Tied with Canada for the top spot was Iceland, followed by Switzerland, Germany, and Australia. For the most part, the Institute ignored American statistics, because the U.S. does not have universal access healthcare.

Looking at disability-free life expectancy, Canada ranked tenth. The top three countries were France, Australia and the United Kingdom.

On the issue of number of doctors per 1,000 people, Canada placed 17th (with 1.8 per 1,000), with the top spots going to Germany (3.3 per 1,000), Belgium (3.1) and Hungary (3.1).

Fraser Forum's managing editor, Kristin McCahon, comments, "Are we getting value for the money we spend? If we spend the most, but are not first on any of the measures of health outcomes, some changes are obviously in order. Other countries spend less and have healthier, more satisfied citizens. We could do a lot worse than experimenting in this country with some of the innovations already in place elsewhere."

Critical of Romanow Report

Institute scholars have been very critical of Roy Romanow's report on Canada's healthcare system, which was released in late November. The Romanow Report "was basically a waste of money," asserts Michael Walker, the Institute's executive director, in an interview with CC. "There was no

See FRASER *page 5...*

Yemeni president condemns attacks at Baptist hospital

... continued from page 1

Kathleen Gariety, from Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, were single.

Caswell and his wife Teresa have three children: a grown son, Jason, and two younger boys, Thomas and Caleb.

Yemeni nationals and other hospital workers mourned at the funeral of William Koehn and Martha Myers on the grounds of the Jibla hospital Dec. 31. The body of the third murdered hospital worker, Kathy Gariety, will be returned to the United States in the next few days.

Yemenis pay respects

During the funeral, several hundred Yemenis gathered at the hospital to pay their respects. Others lined the street for a half-mile outside the hospital gates. Mourners sang "He Is Lord" in Arabic and recited the Lord's Prayer.

Founded in 1965 by the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board (IMB), the 80-bed Jibla Hospital treats 40,000 patients annually in the highland province of Ibb, some 100 miles south of the capital Sanaa. In cooperation with the Ministry of Health, the hospital facility has operated under contract with the Yemeni government.

Only hours after the tragedy struck, most of Jibla's American personnel expressed determination to stay on, despite the risks.

BAPTIST PRESS NEWS

Kathleen Gariety

"We can't let someone with a gun make us afraid to do what God wants us to do," IMB staffer Kaye Rock at the Jibla Hospital told the Baptist Press today. "We're asking people to pray that these deaths will not be a senseless waste, but that God will complete all He has intended here, and that He will be glorified."

Committed to continuing

"Obviously, the needs of the people continue," said International Mission Board President Jerry Rankin, "and the reason our people are there is because of those needs and our care and concern for the people. So we certainly will continue to explore how we might continue the ministry to which God has called us there. We have been negotiating with another organization to take responsibility for the hospital, but we're committed to continuing whatever ministry we can in the country.

"Being in a country like Yemen, our personnel over the years have been prohibited from presenting an overt Christian witness. They've been very respectful of the authorities and the policies under which we serve the people of Yemen," said Rankin.

Gary Smith, chairman of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee said the tragedy should serve as a reminder of the "great courage of our missionaries and how necessary it is for our churches to support them and pray for them."

New depth of commitment

"We are discovering there is a new depth of commitment from people surrendering to missions," he said. "They want to go to a difficult place. They are challenged. And I think it is evidence of God moving among our people who want to fulfill the Great Commission. We need to be aware that the reason we send missionaries is that there are terrorists and ungodly people in the world," Smith added. "What we are doing is what God called us to do — to take the gospel into the dark world."

Ali Abdullah Saleh, the Yemeni President, called the attack "criminal and disgraceful." He said in a message to George W. Bush, the U.S. President: "We are confident that such a criminal act won't affect the friendship and co-operation between our countries but instead strengthen our determination to eradicate terrorism."

A country of more than 16 million people set on the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen is a ruggedly mountainous country bedeviled with conflicts between the government and tribal groups demanding schools, electricity and other services in poor tribal areas. Tribesmen frequently resort to kidnapping foreigners to press their demands. With one of the world's highest birth rates, the country's population has exploded in recent years, but endemic poverty and the rugged terrain prevent access to healthcare.

Yemen has for years been a haven for wanted Muslim extremists and is the ancestral homeland of Al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden reportedly enlisted thousands of Yemenis to fight alongside the mujahedeen of Afghanistan in their U.S.-backed war against the occupying Soviet army in the 1980s. Many returned when the Soviets withdrew, and they are a powerful political force here.

Yemen has signed on as Washington's partner in the war on terrorism launched after the Sept. 11 attacks. In November, a CIA-operated Predator drone fired a missile that killed a man believed to be bin Laden's top lieutenant in Yemen, along with five other people.

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Editorial

Seduced by *Lord of the Rings*

Harry der Nederlanden

My oldest daughter, Clarissa, a drama major, so enjoyed the second part of the movie *Lord of the Rings* that for Christmas she gave Rose and I tickets to see it in the biggest theatre in town. Rose and I decided to go to a matinee. It's cheaper and you can get to bed on time.

Yeah, I know our Dutch heritage is showing and so is the fact that we're getting older. The last time I went to an evening show, I missed part of it. I didn't snore, though.

It wasn't an auspicious day for ageing Dutch-Canadians, however. When we strolled in, hand in hand, expecting to have our pick of seats, the only doubles left were in the first four rows – the whiplash section.

A horrible flashback

I sat there once long ago. One of the characters in the movie was holding a glass of beer that sloshed back and forth, back and forth as he talked. Before he finished his conversation or his drink, I was back on the Volendam plowing through high seas on the Atlantic hanging over the rail. It was a horrible flashback. For me those are not just the whiplash seats; they are also the barf seats.

That's what happens when you go see a movie in a theatre located in a mall. On the way in, Rose spotted a sale on men's slacks in Fraser's and she had to check them out. Otherwise, we might have been in time to get a seat.

At the end of last year, when Rose found out we were going to be attending the 50th anniversaries of the CLAC and the OACS, she decided my gray corduroy jacket was looking too seedy, so she bought me another. It's corduroy too, but it isn't gray. A gray one cost twice as much as the green one. The trouble is that it's an off kind of green, the kind that doesn't match anything. Well, except maybe my eyes when I'm sitting in the first rows in the theater.

Anyhow, nothing I own goes with it. Except blue jeans. And the whole purpose of the jacket was to get me out of blue jeans. It's supposed to confer an aura of class upon me. However, a boy from Beverly may aspire to class, but it will fit him like a bow tie fits a prairie dog. Or penny loafers a hobbit.

Back to the theatre. Rose exchanged our matinee tickets for a later showing. Those cost $3.00 more. Apiece!

I'm watching her at the ticket counter. She hands the fellow the ticket stubs, and then she holds out her hand and he counts out money into her extended palm.

"Didn't they have evening tickets?" I ask when she returns.

"Sure," and she waggles them under my nose. "They're for 7:30."

"Then how come he was giving you money back? They cost more!"

"I asked for senior tickets. They're even cheaper than for the matinee."

Her tone can only be described as smug.

'You mean we're seniors?'

"Oh, you mean we're seniors?"

For the tone of that last question you have to imagine a mixture of horror, disbelief and confusion.

"I don't know," said Rose matter-of-factly.

I looked at her. She's American, you know. They have a don't-ask-don't-tell policy over there.

"Didn't you ask?" I was looking for the moral high ground.

"I have a seniors card at Sears."

There you go. If you find yourself floundering in a morally gray area, just take out your Sears card.

"Now we have money for popcorn."

You can't imagine the profound depth of satisfaction in those words. It was said in the same tone of voice in which Einstein told his wife, "Honey, I've found the formula that unites matter and energy." You don't ask any further questions after that. You've reached the ultimate ground beyond which questions lose their meaning.

Gobbling goblins

That's how we ended up eating popcorn while we watched *Lord of the Rings: the Two Towers*. It was a large bag, too; not the bucket, but pretty close. To keep the moral high ground, I didn't eat any of the popcorn. At least, not until the two little Hobbits got caught in a battle between the cannibalistic Orcs and the riders from Rohan. Then I forgot myself and, while the Hobbits scrambled beneath the bellies of warhorses to elude the evil, snaggle-toothed Orc that had been hungrily eyeing their plump thighs, I suddenly found myself gobbling popcorn.

It was worth every penny. I mean the movie. I emerged a much better man than I went in. To get some idea of the story, read Ron Vandenburg's review on page 7. I'll try to give you some small idea of the effect of the film on my character.

When I went in, the world was a morally gray landscape peopled with ordinary folk like myself going about their petty tasks, caught up in the trivial pursuits of consumer spending (finding matching slacks) and the latest amusements (we spend more on movies than on foreign aid). In this gray world, there are only differences, none more excellent, more true than any other. One commits oneself only to a brand or a team, to Nike or the Maple Leafs. Any other kind of commitment smacks of fundamentalism.

I emerged a transformed being

After less than three hours spent under the spell of *The Lord of the Rings*, however, I emerged a transformed being.

In this film, the peaceful gardens and dens of the hobbits are left far behind, and we are in the harsh, forbidding landscape of a Middle Earth that is a battlefield: rugged, mountainous terrain, barren hills, dense, frightening woods, impassable swamps with bodies floating just beneath the surface of the water. Over this forbidding terrain rules the malevolent spirit of Lord Sauron, symbolized by a flaming eye that hangs over the great, sinister tower.

The scope of his power is demonstrated by the fact that he has turned one of the great wizards, Saruman, into his general. Saruman has hatched a race of foul, cruel beings, Orcs, out of the bowels of the earth – tens of thousands of them and turned them into an inhuman army driven only by a lust for death and destruction. Overhead they patrol the skies on the backs of flying dragons with heads like eels, while other Orcs race to battle on ferocious creatures that are a cross between hyenas and feral cats.

Even more insidious is the spirit of corruption that is invisible, reaching out to the ring in Frodo's possession, the ring that turned a once gentle hobbit-like creature into the hairless, fawning, false creature called Gollum. He now looks like a skinned cat with the head of a lemur.

Over against the vast army of Orcs that swarms across the country like giant beetles determined to exterminate the race of Men, a man with a sword, an elf with a bow and a dwarf with an axe fight to save a small settlement of humans that includes many women and children.

By any rational calculation, they don't have a hope in the world of withstanding the horrific forces arrayed against them. Yet, they fight on desperately, heroically against all odds as the powers of darkness threaten to obliterate all civilization — all that is good and noble and worthy in Middle Earth.

I emerged from the film no longer a man of grays and off-greens but one determined to see the world in black and white, good and evil. Eager to prove my integrity, to defend the good with my very life, to repudiate all compromise with evil, I was ready to defend civilization against the barbarian hordes (Islamic fundamentalists? Anti-family radicals?) My senses were heightened, my resolve strong; I was ready to do battle. Bring 'em on!

Or had the ring cast its evil spell on me? Maybe I shouldn't have passed myself off as a senior citizen....

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News

Lewis B. Smedes, teacher and wise counselor to thousands, dies

PASADENA, CA (ANS) — Lewis B. Smedes, best-selling author of more than 15 books and professor emeritus of theology and ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, died Thursday after a fall at his home in nearby Sierra Madre. He was 81.

Intellectual rigor, pastoral warmth

"With the passing of my dear friend Lewis Smedes, Fuller Seminary has lost one of its great faculty leaders," said Fuller President Richard J. Mouw. "An influential interpreter of our kind of open evangelicalism, he embodied a unique blend of intellectual rigor, pastoral warmth and eloquent expression. More than one of his former students has said that while his class lectures were unforgettable, it was worth coming to class just to hear his opening prayer."

Smedes earned an A.B. from Calvin College, a B.D. from Calvin Theological Seminary and a Th.D. at the Free University of Amsterdam. After serving as a minister in the Christian Reformed Church for several years, Smedes taught at Calvin College before joining the faculty at Fuller Seminary in 1970 as chair of theology and ethics. In 1990 he accepted a chair on the integration of psychology and theology in Fuller's School of Psychology, where he served until retiring in 1995.

"For me, Lew has been one of those strong saints and a marvelous friend," said Max De Pree, former CEO of Herman Miller, Inc., author and Fuller trustee. "He had an ability through his writings and teaching to communicate with everyone."

"Lew knew what it meant to be a friend. His deep caring matched his soaring intellect. His thoughtful devoutness was authentic because it was the bloom of his mind and soul," said Rabbi Allan Schranz of Sutton Place Synagogue in New York City.

Profound books on faith, ethics

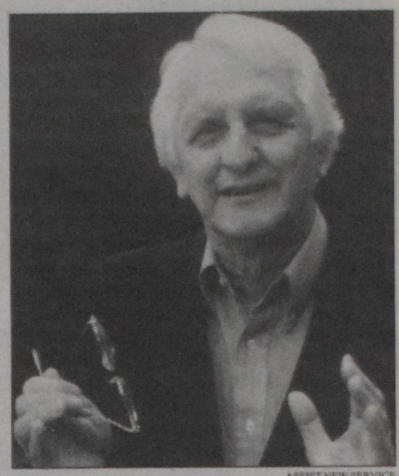
Smedes is probably best known as the author of profound but very readable books on faith and ethics, some of which were translated into several languages. In the classroom, in the pulpit, and in his writings, Smedes frequently discussed the difficult but important issue of forgiveness. In his popular book, *Forgive and Forget*, Smedes wrote: "...when we feel that somebody has hurt us deeply...will we let our pain hang on to our hearts where it will eat away our joy? Or will we use the miracle of forgiving to heal the hurt we didn't deserve?"

Among his other book titles are *All Things Made New; Shame and Grace: Healing the Shame We Don't Deserve; Mere Morality: What God Expects From Ordinary People; Choices: Making Right Decisions in a Complex World; Caring and Commitment; Keeping Hope Alive; and How Can It Be All Right When Everything is All Wrong?*

Smedes' 1984 book, *Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve*, remains a landmark work on the topic of forgiveness. He continued to think, write and speak on the topic up until his death. In fact, in late November he spoke at a California church on forgiveness.

"There are two reasons I am talking about forgiveness today," Smedes said. "First, the single greatest cause of misery and tragedy in our world is the inability of people to forgive those who have wronged and wounded them. Secondly, the only cure for the bad memory of a past wrong is the act of forgiveness."

The subtitle of his book, *Standing on the Promises*, is: "Keeping Hope Alive for a Tomorrow We Cannot Control". That was a crucial theme for Smedes. He liked to tell the story of painter Michelangelo, who, one night, after a long day of work painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, wrote: "I'm no painter." But when the sun came up again, Smedes said, Michelangelo got up from his bed, climbed up his scaffold and labored another day on his magnificent vision of the Creator. What pushed him up the ladder, asked Smedes? Hope.



ASSIST NEW SERVICE

Lewis B. Smedes

"A person without hope is inwardly dead," Smedes once told the *San Diego Union-Tribune*. "There's nothing, nothing, that anybody has ever done without the power of hope." Smedes added that Christianity is big on hope. Christianity, he said, provides hope beyond hope. A hope that can keep you going when you can't find a reason.

And so each day Lewis Smedes continued to labor on his magnificent vision of the Creator. He had the hope beyond hope.

Smedes is survived by his wife, Doris; three children, Cathy, Charles, and John; and two grandchildren.

Fraser Institute offers alternative to Romanow Report

... continued from page 3

new research." The $15 million cost of Romanow's commission could have been better used by "eliminating the waiting list for cardiac bypass surgery for the Maritimes and Ontario," insists Walker. But he adds that the recent Senate report on healthcare, also released last fall,"did a more careful research approach."

Institute's advice ignored

Four Institute scholars "did meet with Romanow when he was in Vancouver," Walker points out. The Institute presented research to him, and one of its senior fellows in Quebec even wrote a report for Romanow. But, says Walker, "As far as we are concerned, he simply ignored it all.... There is no reflection of the August [*Fraser Forum*] report in the Romanow Report.... There's a denial that there are any problems in our system."

Unlike Romanow, Walker believes privatization can improve our healthcare system "What actually improves anything is competition.... What we hope to have is a more competitive environment." But he cautions, "We do want to have a government safety net. We are not happy with the American system, which has deficiencies. We don't want to go to that system."

He notes, "One of the big issues in healthcare is if healthcare is privatized, there's a much greater opportunity for people to work outside of the trade union network." Healthcare unions prefer the current system, he suggests.

In a press release, Walker argues, "Instead of more federal mandates and regulations, Canadians need more freedom to explore different healthcare models and methods. They need more of their spending power left in their hands to spend as they see fit on their own healthcare. Canadians need the freedom to spend their own money to buy access to the accelerated treatments that an increasing number of government agencies like Workers Compensation Boards, the military, and the RCMP are buying from private clinics."

Evidence not in secret vaults

John Graham, director of the Institute's Pharmaceutical Policy Research Centre, wrote in a recent press release, "Roy Romanow ... is either confused or just plain ignorant about the advantages of increased patient choice. After an alarming speech at Harvard University... where he claimed that Canada already has too much private healthcare, condemned people who use their own money to purchase health services, and called for more government spending on health, Mr. Romanow stated in a phone interview that Canadians should, 'Show me the evidence, table it now. I have asked for this for 18 months. Show me the evidence that there is another way to proceed in order to provide the kinds of services and the wait lists that people want.'

"The evidence he seeks is not held in secret vaults; rather it has been presented to him and published repeatedly for many years. Last spring, four Fraser Institute analysts addressed his Commission's Vancouver public hearing....

"The problem in Canada is not a lack of funding for healthcare. The problem has always been the healthcare system itself. It's a massive, centrally controlled, government bureaucracy. And in the true tradition of government bureaucracies, it sucks up increased funding with almost no change in the functioning of the system or the outcomes from it. More money and a bigger bureaucracy won't solve the problem.

"The real solution to Canada's problem can already be found in place in a number of other OECD countries, like Sweden or France," asserts Graham "If Mr. Romanow wants to say that no one has shown him a better way in the 18 months he has been working on his report, then he hasn't been listening or reading anything besides his own private memoirs. We've been telling him plenty."

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Education/Agriculture

Christian Reforming parades for a new millenium

Campus Culture

Peter Schuurman

When Christ came into Jerusalem, the scene was not unlike a parade scene. People were waving banners and singing, and although Christ did not have a large stallion to prance for him, the donkey did just perfectly. For he was not marching to conquer the city, but to die for it. Parades can be easily misunderstood.

A jewel mined from Scripture

The jewel that Calvinism mines from the richness of Scripture is this: faith for the whole life. This is what inspires me to contribute to the intellectual fray, and what opens me to the abundant life that Jesus promised. The whole creation blossoms in the light of God's care and rule, and we are commissioned to steward it with thankful responsibility. This is the parade song of campus ministries, a small, ragged band of Christians who are called to give witness in the academy.

For there are other forces at work. Ideas that carelessly license exploitation of land and people. Programs that deflate the world, and make it sad. Twenthieth century Reformer Evan Runner proclaimed, "The fundamental battle of our time is not to be thought of in the first place as one for the preservation of a familiar and so-called orthodox church organization, or of an abstract system of theological propositions. The struggle of our time goes much deeper: it is a struggle for the religious direction of human society in its totality. The battle of our time — as indeed of any time — is to determine which spirit is to give direction to our civilization... either there is a quickening of faith, which senses the religious unity of life, or there is quiet accommodation..."

Seeking life-giving privilege

This vision is given a greater vividness in the last lecture of Leslie Newbiggin in 1997. After documenting the gradual fragmentation of the West, he explains what it means to see the gospel as public truth: It would mean we would see for such a situation that Christians were sufficiently numerous, sufficiently intelligent, sufficiently hard-working, and sufficiently courageous to shape the opinion of society in such a way that those beliefs had a privileged position in the work of the state.

In every political society there are privileged beliefs. It is an illusion to imagine that any society is totally neutral. In our society it is very easy to identify the privileged beliefs. They can be roughly summed up as a naturalist humanism or a naturalist secularism — the belief that ultimately this world is naturally self-explanatory without reference to divine revelation. These are the beliefs that have the privilege in our society, which control the curriculum for our schools, which determine the boundaries of public discourse in our parliaments and assemblies. Every political society has privileged beliefs. Is it not our duty to work and pray for a society where Christians are so numerous, so well-clued-up, so adventurous, and so confident that they could create a society in which these were the privileged beliefs?

If so they would then be required, not in spite of their Christian beliefs but because of their Christian beliefs, to give freedom to dissent, freedom to disbelieve, freedom to hold other beliefs, that same freedom which God almighty gave to us when he manifested his power and his wisdom on a cross.... Is that not what we ought to envision?"

Self-criticizing privilege

I pass these quotes on to you, but with a reservation. I want to emphasize where I began, which is where Newbiggin ends: the cross. Whenever a people begin to aspire to a position of privilege, they are in great danger. The desire to persuade can easily become the desire to conquer, and the passionate quest to influence often swells into a drive for power. As Mark Noll states in his booklet *Adding Cross to Crown*, we do not desire a return to Christendom. We have sought the crown in our culture for too long, and in doing so, we have forgotten the cross. Christian leadership in any society is always made ironic by its servant ethic. It is always for God, not for itself, and in doing so, is always for the sake of the people, not its own hegemony.

The Reforming bugle call to battle in the last century is being re-formed into a less assertive but nevertheless seductive parade march. As Richard Mouw has said, the chant "There is not one square inch of the universe over which Jesus Christ does not say, 'It is mine!'" is reformed to "There is not one cubic centimeter of the universe over which Jesus Christ does not say, 'I died for you!'" We influence by calling people to a joyful parade rather than by declaring war on our neighbors. We seek to have words of life be privileged over words of death, but our method is not coercive, but demonstrative. Let the church be the parade whose music swells to touch every heart, for in the turning of the heart lies the spiritual revolution of the world.

Peter Schuurman is currently on sabbatical from his campus chaplaincy work at Brock University, in St. Catharines, Ont.

The staff of CC and, I'm sure, all CC readers wish Peter and his new wife the Lord's richest blessings as they start a new life together. Although Peter is on sabbatical from the chaplaincy at Brock University for the next six months, he promises to keep favoring us with his writing. Apparently, he does not consider that work. **– Editor**

Replace Canadian dictatorships with citizen participation

COUNTRY COUNTERCULTURE

VERN M. GLEDDIE

A seemingly ordinary 30-year- old conversation keeps returning to mind. The topic was the proportional representation (p.r.) system of elections in Denmark. The concept of assigning seats in parliament in proportion to the share of votes each party received was new to me, but my interest was kindled. The Canadian system, in contrast, becomes ever more obviously distanced from the people.

Peter Hansen, who had emigrated from Denmark in the 1950s, was slowly drilling a water well in our yard with ancient equipment so we had ample opportunity for conversation. I plied him with questions partly because of interest in my Scandinavian roots.

Much citizen enthusiasm

Mr. Hansen said that Danish citizens are generally very involved in politics. The Dane's votes always count for something because every political party has a good possibility of gaining seats in parliament. Another contribution to voter confidence is the incentive to a wide array of parties to consistently maintain a distinctive set of principles. Strong grassroots input both contributes to party policy and holds its representatives accountable. Members of parliament don't last long unless they are informed on the issues and have a definite, identifiable perspective shared with a significant number of voters. The various parties under the p.r. system do not readily change with the way the wind blows. A consequence of citizen enthusiasm for the political process is high voter turn out at elections.

In contrast, the Canadian way is for the party in power to achieve consecutive huge majorities of seats with only slim majorities or sometimes less than half the total vote. And this with low voter turnout. The reason is that we have a "first past the gate" system of election. That is, we vote for a local candidate and the one with the most votes gets the seat. The contest often revolves around personalities rather than principles and issues. Thus, visibility has become key to getting elected and that in turn requires big money from big donors to get the name and picture out in front of the populace. Parties often do not have distinctive policies or if they do, they cannot be depended on to maintain them when in power.

It is too bad our current system relies on wealthy contributors who inevitably influence decisions made by the party in power. In that environment, advertising pays off. The party or candidates with the most money to spend on an election campaign have the best chance of winning seats. This is disproportionate representation.

A movement of power

A result of our tired and discredited current system has been a movement of power away from parliament to the first ministers of the country. Thus the Prime Minister, for instance, is said to have comparably more power than the U.S. President. Is this democracy?

Canadian voters and even backbench legislators feel they have little or nothing to contribute. Supposing we had a system using proportionate representation. Parties dependably representing a variety of views or philosophies in parliament would engender ever so much more enthusiasm than with the present attitude of doing what is necessary to obtain power.

In columns past I may have been too critical of government policy. Much of that comes out of a feeling of helplessness, not just for my own contribution, but also for that of the average citizen. We don't see significant accountability, checks and balances, or even thoughtful legislating.

Critics of p.r. say it will result only in minority governments and frequent elections. But what has the current system achieved? It is either slow off the mark or too hasty with crucial legislation. There are too many policy flip-flops, promising one thing and doing the opposite. Handouts are given to citizens and corporations for largely political reasons.

Several European nations have for decades operated successfully with some variation on the p.r. system. New Zealand apparently recently adopted p.r. with success.

The only thing stopping us in Canada, federal or provincial, is government clinging to power, which they know will not be guaranteed under the p.r. system.

A truly courageous move by a legislative assembly would be to introduce an election system reflecting voting patterns. That will allow common people like immigrant well-diggers and farmers to make an essential contribution.

Vern Gleddie has a sheep ranch near Edmonton, Alta.

Film Review

The Two Towers: Portraits of Evil

Starring: Sean Astin, Cate Blanchett, Orlando Bloom, Billy Boyd, Brad Dourif, Bernard Hill, Christopher Lee, Ian McKellen, Dominic Monaghan, Viggo Mortensen, Miranda Otto, John Rhys-Davies, Andy Serkis, Liv Tyler, Karl Urban, Hugo Weaving, David Werham, Elijah Wood | Directed by: Peter Jackson | Produced by: Barrie M. Osborne, Peter Jackson, Fran Walsh | Written by: Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens, Stephen Sinclair, Peter Jackson (based on the novel by JRR Tolkien) | Distributor: New Line Cinema
Reviewed by Ron Vandenburg

Lately it seems that with *Harry Potter, Gangs of New York, and Lord of Rings: The Two Towers* that moviegoers are either getting their money's worth or getting bored. Three-hour movies need to be epics that deal with themes that are important to the journey of all. Certainly *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* does just that with its portrayal of the face of evil and the possibility of hope.

In the first book and movie, we see the forces of good mobilize against the power of Mordor. We are introduced to the key players and begin to see what is evil in this beautiful world. Before seeing this second movie, a good review of the first film will help set the tone for *The Two Towers*. In this second movie, as good meets evil, we too are challenged to recognize it, understand its power and struggle against it.

The movies usually have done a good job helping the audience recognize the bad guy. He's the one with the black hat or, in the case of Darth Vader, the dark mask. He's the one with the sinister laugh or the shifty eyes. Of course, *The Two Towers* has the archetypal villains. We can point to some very easily. An army of orcs is hard to miss. With some amazing movie make-up and computer generated effects, each orc showcases what the state-of-the-art is in film today. In other words, they will haunt your dreams. With them, you see the power of rage and brute force. They are evil's warriors, a never-ending multitude that bring despair, ruin and death. The odds are overwhelmingly in their favor. Who could ever defeat them?

I love watching a good villain

I do have a confession to make. I love watching a good villain (I guess I mean a really bad one). A villain who revels in his evil plan is one to watch, because you never know what he will do next, how he will stop the good guy or even when he is defeated, will he ever return to wreak more havoc?

Tolkien made such a character in the form of Wormtongue. What a deliciously sinister name! For the actor Brad Dourif, Wormtongue is that evil henchman with all the control. None of the muscle-bound good guys can do anything. The evil sorcerer has King Theoden (Bernard Hill) under his control, and Wormtongue is there to keep an eye on things and reap all the benefits. With the king doing whatever he says, Wormtongue struts around the throne issuing commands with his usurped power, while casting lustful eyes on the king's niece Eowyn (Miranda Otto). With his serpentine whispers in the king's ear, we picture the manipulative power of a demon in control of a helpless, unknowing victim. How can the king be saved? Who can stop this fiend?

Eowyn (Miranda Otto).

I don't mind saying that it took a while to figure out where evil plays a role in one of the other story strands. In this part, two characters from the last film, Merry (Dominic Monaghan) and Pippin (Billy Boyd), encounter a race of tree guardians called Ents. The tree-folk decide that they do not need to assist in the battle for Middle-Earth, because they will not be affected by the battle. These characters illustrate for us where the heart of evil is in our daily lives. We can see evil easily in the brutal orc, the evil wizard, or the calculating, silver-tongued schemer, but here in the Ents we see inaction, the choice to do nothing. What does that choice allow? For evil to grow in power and for many innocents to be killed.

Ring itself typifies evil

The Ring itself typifies what evil is. All who encounter it are tempted by its seductive power. With all its power, the ring-bearer could defeat all challengers and become like a god. In the first film, we saw what it did to Bilbo, who became ageless but increasingly dependent on the ring. Here we see Tolkien's ideas about evil: it is beautiful, promising much, but in the end, it takes over, changing what the bearer was, using him, only to leave him as a shell. Watching Frodo's struggle against the overpowering influence of the ring continues to be the most important piece of the film. Elijah Wood, who plays Frodo, commented on how difficult it was to play the character over the three films, especially since films are usually shot out of sequence. For him to play Frodo the innocent one day and then Frodo toward the end of the quest the next day was a great challenge. Evil is patient, waiting to grow and to build. For an actor, that progression is key to Frodo's story.

With the Ring comes Gollum, a computer-generated (CGI) character realized through the actions and voice of Andy Serkis. He is the most convincing CGI character that I have seen. He is given a large amount of film time as a lot of the plot revolves around him. To have this CGI character interact with Frodo and Sam requires great directing and acting skill. For audiences, Gollum is quick to be accepted as a character and not just a special effect. Gollum's appearance is not the frog-like creature seen in Lord of the Ring illustrations; he is made more human in the film. Here we see that the ring has reduced him to a shell of his former self, portraying the effects of succumbing to the evil seduction of the ring. It is no surprise to learn that the actor played him like a long-term, aged drug addict. How can modern man understand the face of evil unless it is seen in the terrible mood swings of dependency? Is this a victim of evil to be trusted and pitied or will this addict turn on Frodo and Sam?

KILLERMOVIES.COM PHOTOS

Watching Frodo's (Elijah Wood, above) struggle against the overpowering influence of the ring continues to be the most important piece of the film. Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen) continues to lead the forces and fight the good fight with his trusty and ever resilient sidekicks.

Plenty of hope

Of hope, there is plenty, because it is an epic tale of evil against good. Unfortunately to tell you of the hope is to spoil the movie. Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen) continues to lead the forces and fight the good fight with his trusty and ever resilient sidekicks, Gimli the Dwarf (John Rhys-Davies) and Legolas the Elf (Orlando Bloom). Pippen and Merry provide good comic relief in a film full of war and death. Finally, there is Sam (Sean Astin). In the midst of this story of evil, Sam teaches us about loyalty, friendship, duty and love. He shows hope and shares the thought that "there is some good in this world and it's worth fighting for."

One leader of the dark side: the wizard Saruman (Christopher Lee).

Church

Global trends of 2002 that should impact the church in 2003

In a year-end report released December 30, Elizabeth Kendal of the Religious Liberty Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance highlights several major trends in major trouble spots around the world.

BAPTIST PRESS NEWS

Young people socialize in Harbin, China. The call to reform China's religious policy has been gathering momentum.

1. Openness versus control

A continuing struggle in Communist Asia between increasing openness and maintaining control.

China leads the way in this struggle and has the potential to be a strategic positive influence on its neighbors. There is a long way to go, as the case of Hong Kong's Article 23, the persecution of the South China Church and Pastor Gong Shengliang, and the re-arrest of pastor Peter Xu all demonstrate. Yet we are not without hope.

A leading Chinese evangelical recently said to me that he believed the Chinese leadership was realizing that it could not win its battle against the Church and was gradually giving up and accepting that it has to learn how to live with it. A South China Morning Post article entitled "Reform of religious policy is on the agenda," by Nailene Chou Wiest in Beijing, Dec. 17, 2002, confirms this.

"The government is considering enacting a law on religion to end years of confusion caused by conflicting administrative orders. With a national law on religion, the courts, not the local religious bureau or the public security office, would be the arbiter in the event of a dispute.

"The call to reform China's religious policy has been gathering momentum since the National Work Conference on Religious Affairs at the end of last year. President Jiang Zemin said that religion was likely to outlast the state and the party and urged participants to find ways to 'make socialism and religion adapt to each other'."

China invites experts on religious freedom to visit

Most significantly, the U.S. State Department has reported that one outcome of the recent China/U.S. human rights dialogue is that China has agreed to invite United Nations experts on torture and religious freedom, and a representative from a UN working group on arbitrary detention, to visit the country.

The BBC reported that "U.S. assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor Lorne Craner said China's decision to allow the experts to visit proved that China's communist government is serious about trying to improve its human rights record. 'You usually don't invite those people unless you're serious about addressing the issues they will raise,' he told the Associated Press news agency."

On Sunday Dec. 15, thousands (organizers report up to 50,000) marched peacefully in Hong Kong to protest the proposed anti-subversion legislation — Article 23. "I have never seen so many Christians crusading against the government before," a church activist said (to the South China Morning Post). "It has shown how evil we consider Article 23 to be."

The protest march began in Victoria Park with a prayer session

Continued on page 9...

Three young girls killed in terrorists attack Pakistani church service

Barbara G. Baker

ISTANBUL (Compass) — Two masked assailants attacked a small Pakistani Protestant chapel service in northern Punjab on Christmas night, killing three young girls and leaving 13 other children and their parents wounded.

Christmas program attacked

Some 40 Christians were gathered for a special children's Christmas program on December 25 in the one-room Presbyterian chapel in Chianwali, a remote village about 40 miles northwest of Lahore. Around 8:30 p.m., attackers concealed in women's burqas suddenly burst through the door and threw a bag of explosives into the room.

The two youngest victims, six-year-old Najma Masih and 10-year-old Shumaila Masih, died on the spot, while 15-year-old Razia Masih died en route to the Sarah rural health centre. An estimated 2,500 mourners gathered the following afternoon for the funeral and burial of the three girls in the village cemetery.

Nine of those wounded by the explosion and shattered glass were hospitalized at Gujranwala's district hospital. Punjab provincial officials announced that the cost of their medicines and treatment would be covered at government expense, along with promised compensation to families of the victims.

One woman among those hospitalized does not yet know that her daughter died in the attack, and one of the men wounded severely in the face is not expected to recover the use of an eye.

Despite heightened security measures ordered this week to protect Christmas celebrations in churches across predominantly Muslim Pakistan, no policeman was on duty at the Chianwali service. Three local police officers were suspended today by the deputy inspector general of police of Gujranwala for negligence in the incident.

"That is the normal thing they do, you know, just to pacify people," a local source commented.

"Of course, there was no police guard that night," fumed a Christian clergyman, interviewed by telephone as he returned from the Chianwali funeral yesterday. "But of course now there is an entourage of police from all over the Punjab there, maybe 20 police vehicles!" he told Compass.

Initial media reports indicated the attackers had thrown a hand grenade into the one-room chapel, but senior police official Shahid Iqbal later told Reuters that pieces of metal or shrapnel had not been found in the church. "It was some kind of an explosive device," Iqbal said. After the explosion, "There was smoke and a strange smell, like that of chemicals," one eyewitness said.

Pakistani police promptly arrested a local Islamist cleric later that night, telling the media that Mohammed Afzal was "believed to have instigated the attack," although they had no evidence yet of his "direct involvement." In the First Information Report (FIR) filed in Satrah against Afzal, the fiery Muslim preacher was said to have made hateful remarks against Christians in a mosque sermon in Daska district, not far from the attacked church.

Duty to kill Christians

Afzal reportedly told his congregation that "it is the duty of every good Muslim to kill Christians," Daska police officer Nazir Yaqub told the Associated Press. "Afzal told people, 'You should attack Christians and not even have food until you have seen their dead bodies,'" Yaqub said.

According to local Christians interviewed by "The News" today, Afzal and his followers had attacked the Presbyterian chapel three months ago, throwing stones and threatening the congregation. Although Satrah police were notified of the incident, "they did nothing except giving a strict warning to Afzal and his accomplices," the sources said.

Another five arrests have been made, including Afzal's son Attaullah, who is alleged to have trained in an Afghan terrorist camp. All those detained are open supporters or alleged members of the Jaish-e-Mohammed (Army of Mohammed), Islamic militants fighting Indian rule in disputed Kashmir. The violent group, which has ties to the al-Qaeda terrorist network, is now banned in Pakistan, where its founder has been under house arrest in Bahawalpur since December 2001.

The December 25 bombing was the sixth terrorist attack against Christians in Pakistan in the past 15 months. A total of 42 Pakistanis have been killed and another 88 injured in the targeted attacks against Christian churches, schools and hospitals in Pakistan, in apparent retaliation for the Pakistan government's support of offensives by the "Christian West" against Afghanistan's former Taliban regime and the al-Qaeda movement.

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organized by more than 70 Christian groups. The constitution requires Hong Kong to pass the law, which Beijing is eager to see introduced in order to keep what it calls hostile forces from using the territory to subvert the mainland. (CNN, Reuters). The process of this bill will be watched closely in 2003.

North Korea continued to fluctuate wildly, however, 2002 saw massive changes induced by total desperation. One wonders how much longer the regime of Kim Jong-il can maintain its consistent, relentless, appalling cruelty and repression. When dealing with the outside world, though, Kim Jong-il is less consistent and his unpredictability is his most predictable quality.

Vietnam is one Communist Asian nation where the situation has markedly deteriorated. The Hmong tribe, located in Vietnam, Laos, China and Cambodia, is under intense persecution. This will be a major issue in 2003.

BAPTIST PRESS NEWS

The number of Chinese coming to Christ in Vietnam has slowed down in the past 20 years, but younger Chinese Christians may be on the verge of reversing the trend, fearlessly living their faith to win their country for Christ. Still, the Hmong tribe remains under persecution in Vietnam.

2. Rising nationalism

Rising nationalism linked to religious identity is bringing increased levels of persecution to religious minorities, especially evangelicals. Political parties and religious majority leaders prepared to play this dangerous game can increase their power and influence at the expense of social harmony. Nationalism linked to religious identity and built on a platform of fear has become the political tool of the modern era.

Orthodox The Orthodox Church is linked to the nationalism in Belarus and Russia. Can President Lukashenko maintain his oppressive dictatorship in the face of international pressure through 2003? What happens in these strategic nations sets a precedent for other states in Central and Eastern Europe with large Orthodox populations, such as Ukraine, Bulgaria, Moldova and Romania.

Hindutva In contrast to the predictions of many political analysts, Hindutva (Hindu nationalism) is alive and well in India, fed on a revived and winning diet of fear by politicians who are experts at this game. The results of Hindutva are communal violence, anti-conversion legislation and rising levels of police and government oppression.

Buddhist Buddhist nationalism complete with anti-Christian violence has been on the rise in Sri Lanka for some time. It appears that the situation is set to deteriorate further as anti-conversion legislation (Tamil Nadu style) is being considered and is supported by the leaders of all non-growing faiths (i.e. everyone except the evangelicals).

Cambodia has seen its first sign of Buddhist nationalism. With seven months to go before elections in Cambodia, the battle is on to win the support of Cambodia's influential Buddhist monks. Also, the Cambodian Independent Teachers' Association (CITA) is protesting the mentioning of "God" in school textbooks, on the grounds that the Constitution declares Cambodia to be a Buddhist nation and therefore the mentioning of "God" is alleged to be a direct contradiction of the Constitution. Rong Chhun, the head of the CITA, said any reference to God was a direct reference to Christianity and not Buddhism and "is a medicine that is poisoning students and will lead to social unrest."

3. Islamic polarization

The "War on Terror" has poured fuel on the flames of Islamic renewal across the Muslim world and exaggerated the polarization between the Islamic and non-Islamic communities. Polarization has also increased between hardline and moderate Islam, with many moderates being drawn into the hardline, radical, purist camp.

For decades the Islamic renewal movement has advocated a departure from secularization and modernization and a return to "pure" Islam along Qur'anic lines. This movement increased in momentum through the 1990s. However, when the "War on Terror" commenced (interpreted by many in the Muslim world as a war on Islam) the Islamic renewal movement took on the status of a unifying, anti-crusader/anti-West protest movement.

The trend towards increased Islamization and polarization is seen in the election results from Muslim nations that have had elections since Oct. 7, 2001. Bangladesh, Bahrain, Malaysian state elections, Pakistan — all have seen a profound shift in favor towards radical Islamist, pro-sharia parties. Only in Morocco, while the Islamists increased their representation, did they fail to seize power or influence.

This rise in Islamic zeal and identity, together with the rise in Islamic militancy, backed by the Islamic renewal movement and a bottomless pit of oil money, is set to create serious challenges for religious liberty and for the Church, especially and immediately in the needy and vulnerable regions of Africa.

Ivory Coast (Cote d'Ivoire) is, in a very generalized sense, representative of Africa as a whole. The future of Cote d'Ivoire could be prescriptive of the future of much of central and sub-Saharan Africa.

The Ghanaian Post reported on December 16 on the rebel walkout from the peace-talks. ECOWAS Co-ordinator, President Eyadema insisted that, "the search for a political settlement should involve, exclusively, the Ivorian major political parties." (MPCI is a rebel militia without a political wing.)

It was suggested that if the rebels wanted to be given a political voice then they should form or transform the MPCI into a political party. Rebel leader Guillaume Soro said, "That was the last straw that broke the camels back." This is in spite of the fact that virtually all the rebel's requests had been agreed to. The ECOWAS mediation team was convinced that they had satisfied all the rebels' demands except the resignation of President Gbagbo, which was not considered to be a reasonable request. As Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade acknowledged, "The legitimacy of President (Laurent) Gbagbo, who was democratically elected, cannot be called into doubt."

Nigeria has elections due in or before April 2003. Religion is threatening to be a major and divisive election issue.

Sudan straddles a fence between yielding to Islamist pressure to Islamize the nation by force (acknowledging that through its new oil wealth it has the weapons to do so) or to appease the "anti-terror" West (where many prospective oil markets are located) and work towards a peaceful settlement for Southern Sudan. Talks resume in January 2003 and peace is closer than it has ever been.

Indonesia also straddles a fence between appeasing the hardliner Islamists whose influence is considerable and growing, or protecting minorities, dispensing justice and appeasing the West in regard to dealing with terrorism. Indonesia's ability to confront issues of terrorism, jihad and justice will determine the direction Indonesia goes in 2003. It will not be an easy road either way.

Iran is one Islamic nation where reform is definitely on the agenda. It will be a most interesting nation to watch in 2003.

Morocco, under the leadership of King Mohammed VI, is leading the Arab world in terms of democratic reform and freedom. This will be another interesting nation to watch. King Mohammed VI (38), who married on July 12, 2002 (his wife is a computer engineer), is keen to advance media freedoms, education and tolerance. In his Throne Day speech of July 31, 2002 he said, "Each one of us has to realize what he should do in the future so that freedom, pluralism and diversity, which distinguish our social project, be factors of development and modernity in our country's political life, making of this year a new start for a global upgrading in Morocco, politically, economically, socially and culturally."

4. Retaliatory attacks

If there is an attack on Iraq in 2003, it will doubtless lead to "retaliatory" attacks against Christians, particularly Christian minorities in Muslims nations.

Middle East: The conflict and the situation for Palestinians is a major obstacle to good relationships between Christianity and the Arab nations. Much "goodwill" work is needed.

For more information on the World Evangelical Alliance: **www.WorldEvangelical.org.** *For more stories on religious liberty/persecution issues, click on "Persecuted Church News."*

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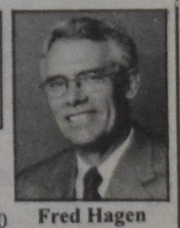

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Opinion

Diversity; what diversity?

Harry Antonides

A recurring theme in the speeches of our Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, is that Canada is a multicultural society, where tolerance is proclaimed to be the highest virtue — at least by all right-thinking Canadians. Diversity is now affirmed and celebrated. But what happens when this modern *shibboleth* leaves us defenseless over against those who declare war on our way of life because they perceive it to be satanic?

It is one thing to recognize that there is a great deal of diversity among people in a free and open society who must and can live together in peace. But it is something entirely different to advocate tolerance and diversity because there really is no yardstick by which we can judge one way to be better than another.

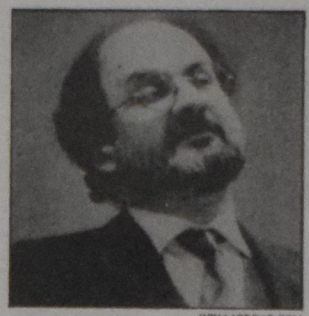
To say that our Western, democratic society is superior to some others is now held to be a form of Western arrogance that must make way for the recognition that all values and cultures are equal. There is no one who can claim to have insight into what is true and best, and what therefore also works best in practice. It all depends on your own preferences.

Of course, in real life such a position of moral equivalence is absurd. This has not become obvious to everyone since we have not yet been fully consistent in following relativism to its logical conclusion.

Complete moral chaos

We have not entirely run aground as a society because there are still surviving among us more traditional ideas of right and wrong that make it possible to consider something good as opposed to evil. But the outcome of the belief underlying the current notion of diversity (multiculturalism) is complete moral chaos. Ideas do have consequences. Evidence of this is all around us to those who have eyes to see. Let me cite one recent striking example.

Most people in North America and Europe were horrified about the terrible evil perpetrated by those who deliberately killed thousands of innocent people in the attacks of September 11, 2001. But it did not take long before this horrendous deed was rationalized as the result of wrongs perpetrated by the U.S itself. Even our Prime Minister indulged in this kind of reverse blame-fixing at the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.



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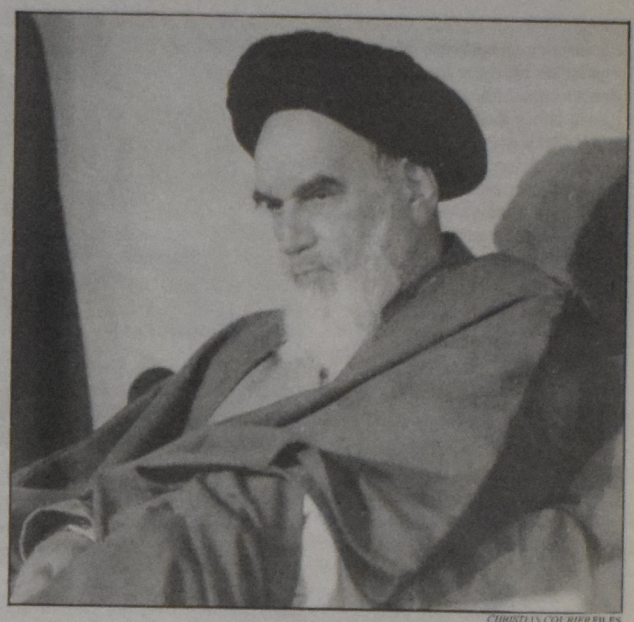
Salman Rushdie

How could this be? There are a number of reasons, but the most important one is that the blame-America-first pundits refused to call evil evil because of their concept of right and wrong.

Exonerators of evil

What is especially galling is that these exonerators of evil do so by setting themselves up as more moral than the U.S. As they see it, America is causing the poverty and suffering in the Third World. That's why Americans are hated and they themselves are responsible for creating the bin Ladens of this world. But if evil depends on our own concept of evil that is grounded in nothing else than our opinions or preferences, then why should the moral indignation of some about American responsibility be any more valid than anyone else's opinion? It then becomes a matter of who can shout the loudest or is the most ruthless and murderous.



CHRISTIAN COURIER FILES

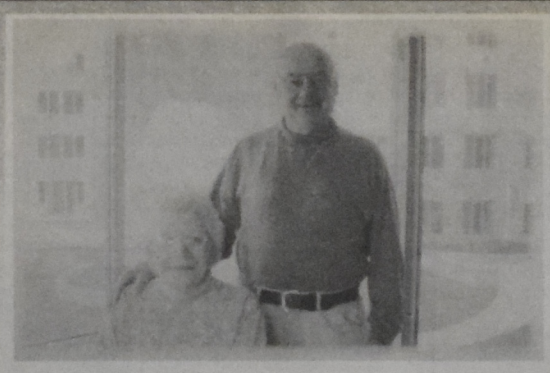
Rushdie's former archenemy, the Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini.

All true dialogue and consensus then is impossible. Then there is no longer any basis on which a civilized and free society can exist. That is why the declaration of war by bin Laden against the West in the name of radical Islam has such ominous implications for us. I am not thinking in the first place of the physical and murderous destruction these haters of the West have wreaked or still may accomplish in the future. No, the real cause of concern lies in the spiritual, or if you will, the moral confusion within the West itself. We are no match against the brazen self-assurance of those who in the name of Allah want to impose Islamist rule (*sharia*) wherever they can. That's why a recent exchange between the *National Post* columnist David Frum and a Muslim spokesman is worth reflecting on.

Frum wrote in his November 30 column about the violent riot in the city of Kaduna in northern Nigeria that resulted in the murder of more than 200 people and the destruction of many churches and houses. This uprising was in protest to a remark by Isioma Daniel who wrote in the Nigerian paper *This Day* about the Miss World beauty contest scheduled in that country. Muslims declared her remark about Mohammed's appreciation of feminine beauty to be blasphemous and deserving the death penalty.

Frum elaborates on this incident by recalling that Mohammed had at least 10 wives, including one whom he forced to divorce from her husband so that he could marry her. Frum concluded, "The West is not Nigeria. Yet even in the West, some radical Muslim groups are demanding the same power over speech and thought that their Nigerian counterparts now exercise...."

As to prove his last point, Zulf M. Khalfan responded in the *National Post* (December 3) by defending Muslims' taking offence at



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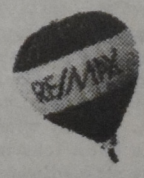

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Opinion

the comments by the Nigerian columnist. He explained that Muslims are offended by any connection between Mohammed and a beauty contest. Then he wrote that each faith, Buddhism, Christianity, and so on, must be respected and be free to make their own choices. (The bitter truth is that while Mr. Khalfan wants freedom of expression for himself and his fellow Muslims in this country, such freedom is totally absent wherever radical Islam holds sway.)

A veiled threat

Khalfan concluded that since Frum "cites Salman Rushdie [still living under a death sentence because of the Islamic *fatwa* on his life], he should know by now the fatal consequences resulting from ignoring this fact."

When strongly condemned in a following letter to the editor for his veiled threat against Frum, Khalfan explained that his comments were not intended to threaten Frum with fatwa, but he only "referred to the innocent lives that were lost by Salman Rushdie's irresponsibility." He then proceeded to justify what he called the provocation of individuals "who cannot control their spiritual emotions and cause the death of innocent people — hence fatal consequences." (N.P. December 5).

When reading these exchanges I had expected (well, hoped) an outburst of all the usual defenders of freedom of the press in defence of human rights and in opposition to the so-called hate literature. As far as I could tell, there was no chorus of protest, only an occasional criticism. The task to put this episode in the right, distressing perspective was left to one whom those in the media mainstream love to hate.

Mark Steyn, devastating skewer of all causes beloved by those who occupy the moral high ground, dissected Mr. Khaflan's remarks in his *National Post* column of December 5, "A fatwa of one's own." He wrote:

"Well, Mr. Khalfan has now 'clarified' his original letter on the page opposite. He does not want to kill David Frum. He just wants David to be aware of how easy it is to provoke other people into killing him."

Steyn then reviewed the Muslim case against Salman Rushdie, on whom the Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini had pronounced the death sentence (fatwa) in 1989 for his book *The Satanic Verses*. Steyn poured contempt on the Western elite's limp, cowardly responses to this exhibition of fanatical hatred. Muslim mobs marched in English cities demanding the death of Rushdie. Mohammed Siddiqui, a Muslim spokesman wrote in defense of the fatwa against Rushdie in *The Independent*. He quoted the Koran, Sura 5 verses 33, 34: "The punishment of those who wage war against God and His Apostle, and strive with might and main for mischief through the land, is execution, or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile from the land...."

Harsh words

Steyn had harsh words for the supporters of the fatwa on Rushdie, and for Mr. Khalfan's defense of the murderous rioters in Nigeria: "If that Nigerian mob are really no more than 'pious Muslims,' then pious Muslims should be ashamed. Pious Muslims can follow the murder-inciters of Bradford, the suicide-bombers of the West Bank and the depraved killers of northern Nigeria on their descent into barbarianism. Or they can wake up and save their religion. Mr. Khalfan's sophistry won't cut it."

This is what public debate in Canada has now come to. What has happened that diversity is now being throttled by religious zealots who do not shrink back from issuing not-so-veiled threats and justifying murder and violence — also right in our own country? No one would have believed only a few years ago that any such thing would happen here.

The brutal truth is that those who advocate a kind of multiculturalism based on the belief that there is no transcendent standard for right and wrong are rendering themselves defenseless. They will find their hands tied when faced with those who are driven by a fanatic conviction that they possess the truth of Allah and are entitled — yes duty bound — to impose their rule on everyone else.

We should be grateful that the Frums and Steyns are still around. But where are all the other defenders of diversity and human rights now that we really need them?

Harry Antonides, a national board member of the Christian Labour Association, lives in Willowdale, Ont.

Toronto's 'inclusive congregation deserves thoughtful attention

Re. First CRC Toronto becomes inclusive congregation (Dec. 2, 2002): At the January 23 meeting of Classis Toronto, the delegates representing Toronto-area Christian Reformed Church congregations will be dealing with the Open Pastoral Letter dated October 10, 2002, from the Council of First CRC Toronto regarding its "basic decision as a church ... to identify ourselves as an inclusive congregation." Its "statement of faith and action" includes the following:

"We affirm that all who seek to live faithfully, that is confessing Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, are full participants in the life, membership, sacraments and leadership of this congregation."

"First CRC will consider nominations of gay and lesbian members, including those living in committed relationships, for all elected offices. Out of respect for the denomination's position, we will defer sending elected gay or lesbian council members to classis in the immediate future."

Toronto First's Letter clearly conveys that its Council and congregation have been struggling in faith with complex questions that also confront other CRC churches, namely, why and how can we all engage most meaningfully in inclusive Christian ministry that welcomes the full participation of all church members who publicly confess that "Jesus Christ is their Lord and Savior"?

In-depth discussion needed

Classis Toronto's agenda and the accompanying materials submitted for the churches' serious consideration clearly deserve thoughtful attention and in-depth discussion. It is also apparent that the churches belonging to Classis Toronto require adequate time for biblical reflection that includes the informed participation of their confessing members. Obviously, the unique challenges presented by the Council of First CRC Toronto need communal education and open-hearted interaction.

In my view, given the diversity of opinions among and within our churches, Classis Toronto should help give all concerned and affected appropriate information and ample opportunity to engage in dialogue. I'm sure my concern will be shared by others when they learn what the churches and their councils must carefully consider and eventually decide on.

An urgent need

I strongly feel that Classis Toronto should fully recognize the urgent need to provide adequate opportunity to the churches for informed, respectful dialogue, so that we all can do biblical justice to First Toronto's "basic decision as a church ... to identify ourselves as an inclusive congregation."

I am confident that the time provided to think through and discuss what it actually means to engage in inclusive Christian ministry will ultimately prove to be a genuine blessing when undertaken in faith and hope, all the while listening to the message of the Scriptures and the wisdom of God's gracious Spirit. I hope for a favorable response.

Gerald Vandezande, C.M.
Scarborough, Ont.

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Opinion

Under the shadow of war: a visit with the people of Iraq

JAMES KWANTES PHOTOS

Scenes such as this have been present for thousands of years in Iraq.

James Kwantes

As a larger-than-life Saddam Hussein peered down from an oil painting on the waiting room wall at the Jordan-Iraq border, I stared back, wondering where our journey into the "land between the rivers" would take us. There were no flights into Baghdad at the time, so our delegation's trip began with a flight into Amman, Jordan and a 12-hour taxi ride through Iraq's western desert.

It's one of the ironies of the current standoff that Iraq is home to one of the largest Christian minorities of any nation in the Middle East.

While working as a reporter for the *Abbotsford News*, I traveled to Iraq with a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) peace delegation in March 1999. The Mennonite relief and development agency has been active in the country for several years, shipping everything from tomato seeds to school kits and working on development projects in order to improve the humanitarian situation there. The MCC peace delegations are an effort to evaluate the situation in the country and an opportunity for peaceful, face-to-face interaction with the Iraq people.

Saddam and his many guises

I saw a lot more of the Iraqi President and his many guises in the next 11 days: Saddam the devout Muslim, Saddam the revolutionary, Saddam the general and Saddam the friend of children. More than anyone or anything else, Hussein has become the personification of Iraq, the prism through which the country and its people are viewed and judged.

But a different reality emerged in the villages of the western desert, on the plains between the Tigris and Euphrates and in the coffee shops, mosques, churches (yes, churches), marketplaces, hospital rooms and classrooms of Baghdad and Basra. For these are the places where ordinary Iraqis eke out a living, socialize, worship, conduct their business, treat their wounded and teach their children.

Political freedom may be non-existent, and the regime's use of torture and murder on real or perceived opponents of the regime is well-documented. But in this land that has become the latest focus of the American "war on terror," I experienced unparalleled hospitality, as did the Americans on our delegation. We didn't encounter the angry anti-Western protests or enthusiastic pro-Saddam rallies one sees on network television.

Christians have more freedom

In the view of this U.S. administration, Iraq belongs to the "axis of evil." Yet both Christians and women have more freedoms than they do in Saudi Arabia, America's staunch ally. In the southern city of Basra one Sunday, our delegation worshiped at a Christian church service attended by several hundred Iraqis. One of the languages used in the service was Aramaic, a language Jesus spoke — testament to the age of the Christian church in Iraq.

It's one of the ironies of the current standoff — and there are no shortage of them — that Iraq is home to one of the largest Christian minorities of any nation in the Middle East. Before the birth and spread of Islam, Iraq was a predominantly Christian land whose church dated back virtually to the time of Christ.

So this Christmas, Chaldean Catholics and evangelical and Armenian Christians in Iraq celebrated the birth of the Christ child with the shadow of war looming over their country, again. Meanwhile, conservative Christians in the United States interspersed prayers for "peace on earth" with prayers of support for their Commander-in-Chief, himself a Christian, who spent the Christmas holidays sending troops, fighter jets, battleships and aircraft carriers to the Persian Gulf.

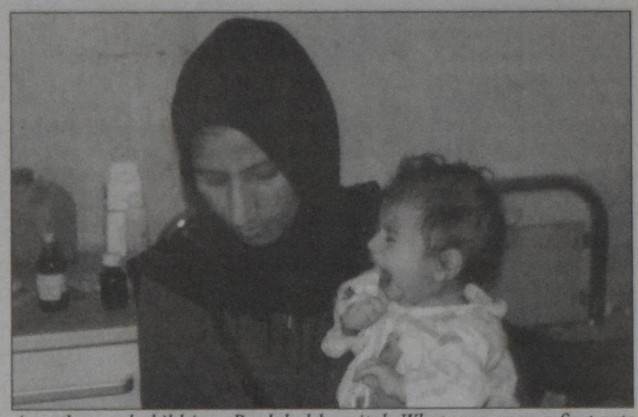
War was also in the air when our delegation of four Canadians and three Americans traveled to Iraq. Two months before, on Dec. 16, 1999, U.S. President Bill Clinton had launched several days of bombings dubbed "Operation Desert Fox" after weapons inspectors left the country. At the time, I sat in the newsroom at *The Abbotsford News*, watching CNN footage of bombs dropping on Baghdad and wondering if the bombardment would result in the cancellation of the long-awaited trip.

The mission was postponed for a month, and I flew to New York in late-February to meet other members of the delegation and for briefings with various ambassadors to the United Nations and UN officials. After stops in Amsterdam, Beirut and Amman, we were driven by two Jordanian taxi drivers from the Hashemite kingdom into Iraq.

Abraham's first home

Our travels took us from the capital of Baghdad, a sprawling city of five million people, to the southern city of Basra, a port on the Shatt al-Arab ("river of the Arabs"). We also walked in the footsteps of Nebuchadnezzar and Hammurabi in Babylon, and visited an ancient ziggurat in Ur, Abraham's first home.

To visit the latter, located in the heart of the southern "no-fly" zone, our delegation needed the permission of the governor of the area. While enjoying sweet tea in a waiting room of the government building, an air raid siren went off nearby. While the Iraqis in the room were unfazed by the occurrence, we gazed at each other with worried looks. An official with the Iraqi Red Crescent who was accompanying us laughed as he pointed up at the sky, then down at the ground, mimicking the path of the bomb that could drop at any time. The dark irony of the situation hit me as well, and I shared a smile with him. The bomb didn't fall (at least not in the immediate vicinity), and the governor granted us permission to visit Ur, although he warned that he couldn't guarantee our safety. Upon returning to New York, I discovered there had been near-daily bombings in the southern no-fly zone during our stay in Iraq.



A mother and child in a Baghdad hospital. What was once a first-rate medical system (in the 1980s) has deteriorated, and is ill-equipped to deal with the human consequences of a war.

War a constant companion

With little interruption, war has been an almost constant companion of Iraqis since Saddam Hussein invaded Iran, his eastern neighbor, in 1980. Add to that 12 years of international sanctions that have gutted a heavily oil-dependent economy, and it becomes obvious that life for the average Iraqi is a grinding struggle.

But one wouldn't come to this conclusion from speaking with and observing the people in Iraq. Conversation is an art form in the Arab world, and hospitality second nature. Wherever our delegation visited, time seemed to slow and the first half-hour (at minimum) was spent socializing and drinking tea. On one hot afternoon in Basra, I spotted a man with an ice cream cone and asked him where I could purchase one. He walked me to the shop and insisted on purchasing the ice cream cone for me.

Neither are most Iraqis preoccupied with their plight, with sanctions or with the country's once friendly, now troubled relationship with the United States. One evening I was meandering by myself along a street in Baghdad when I was drawn to the Palestine Hotel by an explosion of music. It was a wedding celebration. As a brass band played, men and women danced and children shouted with joy. I stopped and watched, along with a taxi driver who had also pulled over to witness the happy spectacle.

'Welcome back to civilization'

"Welcome back to civilization," a member of our church remarked upon my return home. I had just come back from a country where people have lived in cities for thousands of years, a land that had introduced the plow and agriculture, and a nation where human beings first wrote things down to communicate: cuneiform on wet clay tablets.

A thousand years ago, during Islam's golden age, Baghdad was considered the intellectual capital of the world, and was a centre of learning, religion, culture and trade. The city had a teaching hospital, and many of the medical research works written in Baghdad during this time were used as reference texts by European doctors for the next 600 years.

Allies with U.S. and U.K.

In more recent times, while Saddam Hussein and Iraq were allies with Britain and the United States, many Iraqi doctors and teachers were trained in those Western countries. There was also billions of dollars in arms sales between U.S. and European countries, and close military co-operation, with the U.S. providing Iraq spy pictures of Iranian troop movements towards the end of the Iran-Iraq war, for example.

I got the impression from talking to Mohammed, a university student I met at an auction in Baghdad, that he imagined people in North America were aware of some of this history.

A devout Shi'ite Muslim who is fluent in English, Mohammed drove me in his beat-up compact car to the family home, where I met his sister and mother (who gently chided me in English for my limited command of Arabic). We then visited a Shi'ite mosque where he worships, passing soldiers toting assault rifles as we walked towards the front entrance.

We arranged to meet a week later, on my last night in Baghdad, and I sat with Mohammed and his friend in a dimly lit café. We talked for hours about our families, job

Opinion

prospects, religion, music and movies. At the end of the night, we parted ways with the traditional Arabic kiss on each cheek, and Mohammed slipped a turquoise-stone ring off his finger and pressed it into my palm.

"Remember us," his friend told me.

I treasured these meetings, for there was no government minder monitoring the conversations and Mohammed spoke frankly. He bemoaned the lack of opportunities in the country, and inquired about job prospects in Canada and the price of a Canadian visa. But he also told me, "For me to leave Iraq would be like a fish leaving the water."

Christians not persecuted in Iraq

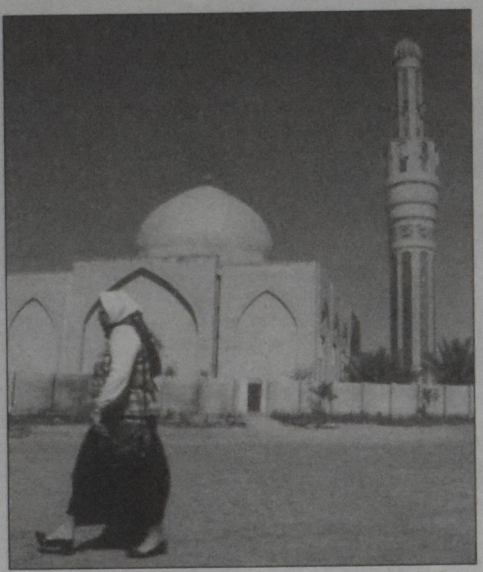
While Christians are persecuted in some Muslim countries, Iraq is not one of them. In this ancient land, the Islamic sect of the Shi'a is the target in Iraq. I learned from Mohammed how Shi'ite Muslims have suffered under Saddam Hussein's rule. Only two weeks before our meeting, a prominent Shi'ite *imam* (religious leader) had been assassinated along with two of his sons in the southern city of Najaf. The killing had shocked Mohammed, who had studied under him.

The killing was the latest in a decades-long campaign of repression against a group seen as a major threat to Hussein's grip on power. While about two-thirds of Iraqi Muslims are Shi'ite, the minority Sunnis control the government and the levers of power.

"You know, and the whole world knows, who did it," Mohammed said of the killings.

In the days and weeks following the assassination, Shi'ites in Baghdad and in various southern cities rose up in anger against the regime. Dozens were killed as the military put down the uprisings, Mohammed said. This was the reason for the soldiers patrolling in front of the mosque, and for a canceled visit to the southern Shi'ite holy city of Kerbala, where our minder told us the Friday prayers sometimes get "political."

But Mohammed did not perceive the United States as a liberator of his people. For the protests in the southern cities were crushed within the southern no-fly zone — an area in which Shi'ites are supposedly protected from their own government by patrolling U.S. and British fighter jets. And the betrayal of the southern Shi'ites by the Americans in the aftermath of the Gulf War is also fairly fresh in Iraqi minds. Rise up against your wicked leader, U.S. President George Bush (Sr.) told the Shi'ites, as Saddam's weakened military retreated in the face of overwhelming American force. When they followed his advice, Saddam summoned his Republican guards and brutally crushed the rebellion, while U.S. soldiers sat on the sidelines. Then, U.S. military was under orders not to get involved in Iraq's internal matters or leadership battles. It is now on the verge of invading Iraq with the stated aim of overthrowing the country's leader.



A woman walks past a mosque in Baghdad; 65 per cent of Iraqis are Shi'ite Muslims and 35 per cent are Sunni. Three to five per cent of Iraqis are Christians.

U.S. obsessed with Iraq's oil

For Iraqis — then and I suspect now, too — there is little doubt of the real reason for the continuing U.S. obsession with their country: oil. Iraq, which nationalized its oil production in the 1970s, is home to the world's second-largest oil reserves — a lucrative prize for oil companies always on the lookout for new territory. As the Iraqi Minister of Information, a British-educated woman, told our delegation, "If America wants to build an empire, it should be a friendly empire. If America wants our oil, it is for sale."

In recent months, as President George W. Bush and his fellow travelers have relentlessly ramped up the war rhetoric, I can't help but think of George Orwell's 1984 and one of the totalitarian party's slogans: "War is Peace." When Bush can proclaim, with a straight face, that he's a man of peace, and make the same assessment of his closest ally, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, could anyone dispute that he is adhering to the maxim of "the bigger the lie, the more people will believe it"?

There is a tribute, of sorts, to the elder Bush at the entrance to Baghdad's al-Rashid Hotel, where the UN weapons inspectors are now staying. A marble mural of the scowling former president greets visitors along with the caption in English and Arabic, "Bush is criminal." (In the Arab world, showing somebody the bottom of your feet is considered a grave insult.)

The mural, of course, was installed after the Gulf War, considered a great military success by the Americans. The war devastated Iraq, both in terms of lives lost and damage to the country's civilian infrastructure.

The doorman at the al-Rashid Hotel laughed heartily when I joked that a second mural might have to be added because it looked as though George W. Bush, then the Texas governor, would one day occupy the White House. I often think back to my remark that day, as the younger Bush makes plans to invade Iraq.

Before the Gulf War, I remember hearing about Iraq's fearsome one-million-man army and its dangerous military. Then I watched in the final days of the war as vast numbers of ill-equipped Iraqi conscripts surrendered en masse, creating the single largest logistical problem the U.S. military faced during the short, one-sided war.

A fabricated story

I remember the eyewitness account of Iraqi soldiers entering a hospital in Kuwait, taking babies out of their incubators, and leaving them to die — and the worldwide outrage that account generated. It emerged later that the tale was just that, a fabrication engineered by U.S. public relations giant Hill and Knowlton, which had been hired by the Kuwaiti government to generate support for U.S. entry into the war. The 15-year-old "eyewitness" was the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador.

Former president Bush used to talk about the importance of "liberating" Kuwait and restoring freedom and democracy to that desert land. Twelve years later, the same autocratic royal family rules Kuwait and democracy is as much a mirage now as it was then. I suspect the younger Bush is as interested in establishing democracy in Iraq as his father was in Kuwait.

In the months since the Bush administration declared Iraq one of the No. 1 foreign threats to the security of the United States "homeland," it has been overtaken by world events. Al-Qaeda and its allies continue to orchestrate attacks against American and Western targets, and increasingly, against Americans living abroad. Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden is presumably still alive and planning further attacks. Meanwhile, the U.S. pledges to take the diplomatic route on North Korea, a nuclear-armed hermit state led by an unstable Communist leader who has overseen years of famine in his country while enthusiastically exporting sophisticated ballistic missiles to whoever can come up with enough hard currency.

Weapons of mass destruction

The over-used phrase "weapons of mass destruction" must ring particularly hollow to Iraqis who have already withstood the full might of the U.S. military once and are about to experience that terrible reality again. One of the lasting images of the Gulf War was U.S. Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf entertaining gathered media with video footage of laser-guided "smart" bombs blowing up Iraqi military targets. The powerful weapons seemed almost surgical in their precision, and the technology behind them, omnipotent.

Yet more than 90 per cent of the tens of thousands of tonnes of bombs dropped on Iraq during the Gulf War were of the cheaper, "dumb" variety. Human rights organizations have documented that the U.S. and its allies bombed bridges during the daytime, increasing the likelihood of civilian casualties. Stray bombs fell on crowded markets and residential buildings.

One of the most damning — and publicized — cases of "collateral damage" during the Gulf War was the bombing of the Amariyah bomb shelter in Baghdad on the morning of Feb. 13, 1991. At about 4:30 a.m., a stealth fighter dropped two 900-kg bombs on the shelter. The first blasted through the air vent, the weakest point in the building, and the second, an incendiary bomb, blew through the hole and exploded inside. The attack killed more than 200 Iraqis, mostly women and children, and left few survivors. Our delegation was given a tour of the shelter by a woman who lost two children and seven other relatives in the attack. The gaping hole in the roof remains, as does the crater in the floor and the burned, blackened walls and pillars. The shelter has become a shrine, packed with memorials, photographs of victims and childrens' drawings.

When I'm doing Iraq presentations in junior high schools and tell students that some of the people in the shelter were incinerated because the temperature was so hot, invariably one or two kids will laugh or say, "Cool." I remind them it wouldn't be so cool if it was their own mother that got killed, or their sister or brother.

'Slaughter' more accurate

American officials stubbornly stuck to their assertion that the bomb shelter was an Iraqi military command and control centre, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. There were more Iraqi civilians killed in that single attack than there were U.S. soldiers killed by Iraqi soldiers during the entire war. So in the case of the last U.S. attack on Iraq, "war" becomes a term used loosely and in the interests of objectivity where a noun such as "slaughter" is more accurate. According to one UN fact-finding report published shortly after the end of the war, Iraq had been relegated to "a pre-industrial age," with water and sewage treatment plants and power plants in ruin. Estimates of the number of Iraqi civilian casualties run from the tens of thousands to 100,000, but who's counting?

Depleted uranium is another legacy of the Gulf War. The campaign to drive Iraqi forces out of Kuwait was the first war in which the United States used depleted uranium (DU) to coat their bombs and missiles. DU, a nuclear by-product, is one of the hardest substances on earth and is ideal for piercing through heavy armor and other defences. It's also radioactive. Iraqi doctors blame the DU that is littered throughout southern Iraq for the sharp increases in cancer and birth deformities that began occurring in the early to mid-1990s. Some U.S. doctors also blame DU for Gulf War Syndrome, the mysterious debilitating illness that afflicted thousands of U.S. and other Allied soldiers that had fought in the war.

The Iraqi medical system is ill-equipped to handle the human fallout from another large war, according to David Swann, an Alberta medical doctor who traveled

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Why go to church? 11

To be engrafted into his body

A. A. van Ruler

We go to church also to become part of a body, to be incorporated into it in a fourfold sense: first, into the body or fellowship, into the communion of saints; secondly, into the holy things, the sacraments; thirdly, into the Holy One, the Mediator; and fourthly, into the Triune God.

The first, or at least the central one, is to become a member of the body of Christ. He is the Mediator. He is God the Son in human flesh who brought about atonement for sin and victory over death. In him and through his work eternal life has entered into time. In him has dawned a new creation, a new being, a new humanity. New in the sense of renewed. The old creation is not done away with like a pair of old shoes that are worn out. No, redemption in Christ means that the old creation is salvaged from complete decay; it is cleansed of all forms of corruption and is posited anew before the face of the Triune God as a new thing.

All this was accomplished for us in Christ by the way he walked and the work he fulfilled — the way of the cross and the resurrection from the dead — the way of the atonement for sin and the victory over death. Or we can also speak of the merits Christ won and of the gifts and treasures that are his and that can be ours, too, in the Holy Spirit.

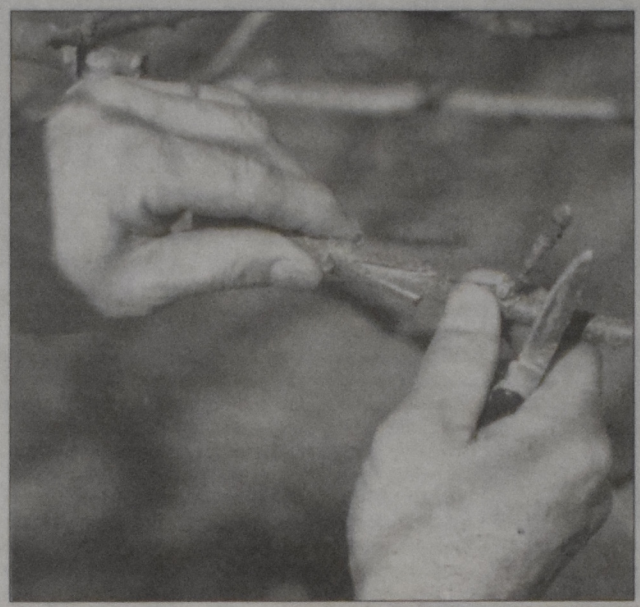
We could go further and say that it isn't really about Christ but about the covenant of which he is the mediator. We are talking here of the covenant of grace that the Triune God established with mankind. This covenant was sealed by the work of Christ and made real in time.

Yet, salvation is not exclusively contained in the covenant, in the merits and gifts of Christ, or in his way and work; it is also contained in himself, in his person, in God the Son incarnate. He himself is a unique reality.

Mystical union with Christ

And it is into him that we must be engrafted. This is the *unio mystica*, the mystical union with Christ. Then, as the New Testament puts it, we are "in Christ". This means more than sharing in his way of life, imitating his liberating example. It also means more than being in the new relationship he created between man and God. We are in him, in his body. We ourselves *are* his body.

This is a mystery greater than any the world had seen before. He is the Son of God in human flesh. He carries the world in all its lostness and its guilt. He brings to light eternal life. And the fact that we are united with him in one body is an even deeper and higher mystery. In this mystery beats the heart of the Christian faith: We are in Christ!



RUNK/SCHOENBERGER FROM GRANT HEILMAN

"In the sermon God asks us for our hand in marriage. And then, in principle, it happens: we are engrafted into the body of Christ."

When we ask ourselves how our participation in the body of Christ comes about in relation to churchgoing, inevitably the sacraments come to mind. We go to church to take part in the sacraments, so to be engrafted into Christ.

Like a marriage

But before that comes the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit takes the external call which comes to us from history and makes it internal. When it has been so completely internalized that it comes from inside and receives a wholly voluntary response, the engrafting into Christ takes place and we become members of his body. Through the faith planted in us by the Spirit comes the mystical union with Christ.

In other words, it's quite a process. It is like a marriage, which is also a union into one body: a man and a woman become one flesh. How does a marriage come into existence? It begins with a light flirtation and proceeds to dating. As they date, a boy and a girl get to know each other, then to like each other, and eventually to love each other. On some moonlit night the boy freely and eagerly asks the big question, and the girl just as eagerly and freely says yes. Then follow the engagement, the wedding, the honeymoon and... they live together happily ever after.

The heart of the matter consists in the fact that there are two people – the bride and the groom. The same is true in the worship service: there are two – the congregation and Jesus Christ, or the people and God. They must meet one another. Question and answer must pass back and forth between them in the magnetic field of freedom.

A person must be transformed into the bride, the people of God. But Christ, the groom, must also be there. He must pose the question.

This is where the offices of the church come in. They are indispensable in the worship service, for in the offices of the church God-in-Christ approaches us. He asks the question. This happens in the sermon. In the sermon God asks us for our hand in marriage. And then, in principle, it happens: we are engrafted into the body of Christ.

Two sacraments

This is a good picture of the sacraments. They are just as essential as the internalization of the call by the Spirit. The engrafting into Christ receives material form in the sacraments. We might even say that it is realized in it or even that they happen there.

We know two sacraments. The sacrament of baptism is wholly one of engrafting. When we are baptized as babies we are brought to church by our parents. That's the first time most of us go to church — an extremely remarkable event.

Baptism is a washing, a being buried with Christ and being raised with him. In baptism we are cut off of the old stem of Adam and engrafted into the new stem of Christ. We become members of his body. This is true in both the administrative and spiritual sense of the word. A child who is baptized comes under the administration of the officers of a church, and at the same time he is counted as engrafted into Christ, fully partaking in his grace.

Fellowship with Christ begins with baptism, and the Lord's Supper upholds it, sustains it and celebrates it. It isn't just necessary for us to join this fellowship and stay with it, but this fellowship also has the potential of being not only such a high and deep but also such an enjoyable affair that it, one might say, delights in itself.

Joy keeps bubbling up

This is the way of young love: the joy keeps bubbling up at being with one another. This note of joy can be detected throughout the entire marriage. One may not actually notice it, perhaps, until the other dies.

This is, as I see it, the essential thing about the Lord's Supper. It is more than nurture and maintenance; it is a celebration of fellowship, a delighting in one another. In the Lord's Supper we participate in his body and blood, in him who is both God and man, just as in marriage two become one flesh. Without the mystery of human sexuality as a model the mystery of our sacramental communion with Christ cannot be understood.

The sacraments ought, therefore, to be celebrated regularly, but the Lord's Supper ought to be celebrated much more frequently than it is now in Protestant churches. Calvin wanted to celebrate the Lord's Supper every Sunday, but the people wouldn't tolerate it. They feared it would lose its holiness. But Calvin was right; we also go to church to celebrate communion with Christ in the Lord's Supper.

Those who believe in Christ should celebrate the Lord's Supper at every opportunity, just as a bride is eager to be with her mate. Not that believers ought always to be in the throes of love, but at bottom it is a matter of spiritual pleasure.

We can only join Christians of all ages in recognizing that the Lord's Supper is one of the centre points and even the high point of the liturgy. This is not to displace the ministry of the Word, for it is the other centre point of the ellipse. Nor is this to deprive the other elements of the liturgy (praise, prayer, offering, etc.) of their independent worth. But if we are asked what churchgoing and worship are really all about, we must simply answer: "About fellowship with Christ, joyfully celebrated in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper." We might even add that all the other parts of the worship service thereby take on something of the coloration and savor of the sacrament.

Engrafted into the triune God

The Christian faith does not, however, stop at fellowship with Christ. The sacraments are a form of Christ and Christ is a form of the Triune God. Fellowship with Christ, therefore, also means (I'm tempted to say "something more") fellowship with the Triune God. In our communion with the Mediator, we also have fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Our engrafting is also into the Triune God, for this fellowship also means we are bound with him and united with him. It comes down to knowing with the Triune God, willing with him, speaking with him, acting with him – in short, being of one mind with him. Our union with him is a communion with his Word, his will, his eternal counsel.

Is it also a union with his being? On this point we must be careful. For we must always remain ourselves. Ultimately, we have our own created being, so we must live our own lives and not the life of God. We must live our own lives before the face of God. But God did truly give himself, but he gave himself in his Word, his will and his eternal counsel. This is how we have communion not only with his life but even with his very being.

This is the high melody that rings in and through the Lord's Supper. It resounds with trinitarian notes and melodies. It involves much more than Christ and the salvation we have in him; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are present in the Lord's Supper. We have sacramental communion with them.

Is this communion only sacramental? Isn't there also a "spiritual" communion, a hidden fellowship with our Mediator and with the Triune God that fills our whole heart and the totality of our existence, albeit only in the form of an inexpressible, secret delight? We should, I think, answer with a passionate "Yes" to that. But for that we need not go to church; for that we live in the world. Our entire existence from birth to death is filled with it.

When we go to church, we are also incorporated into another fellowship – the fellowship with one another. This is nothing to be taken for granted, for it is a fellowship with other believers, other churchgoers. It is not at the same time, however, fellowship with all other people.

There is a painful divide that runs through humanity. There are masses of people who do not go to church, who do not believe. We must take their unbelief seriously. They do not confess the name that we confess, and we must allow them that freedom. They do not wish to be engrafted into fellowship with the Mediator and the Triune God and therefore not with us either. We may be bound with them on the basis of kinship and country, nature and history, genes and geography in the one great irreversible historical process of the world, but we are not bound with them in salvation.

This painful division

This painful division comes with the church as such; however, the flip side is a deeply moving beauty. Nowhere else in the world, in no other terrain of life can we find so deep a bond as in church. Here we are bound together at the very roots of life. We are not just bound together by the fact that we confess the same things, not that confession is a minor thing, but it isn't the only thing. We are bound together by the fact that together we *are* the church. We are bound with one another liturgically and sacramentally. We are bound together in faith, a faith by which we live and die. We are bound together in the Mediator and in the Triune God. In the ultimate things of existence we are bound to one another. Yet, we feel the pain and sorrow of the lack of this bond with those who are not believers.

We must be careful not to turn the fellowship of believers into something merely human. It is true that often we go to church alone. We may know hardly anyone, be greeted by no one, and return home as lonely as when we went.

A mystery so deep

On the surface there may be a certain anonymity in many churches. Nevertheless, we participate in the communion of saints. We sing together, pray together and confess in one voice. The same familiar words are spoken over us and we gather together around one table. Although we may barely know one another's name, we do know and confess his name.

THE LAST SUPPER, TEMPERA ON WOOD PAINTING (1464-67) BY DIERIC BOUTS

"Those who believe in Christ should celebrate the Lord's Supper at every opportunity, just as a bride is eager to be with her mate."

The communion of saints is a mystery so deep and so great that it needs the spaciousness of a cathedral. In a small room or in a house church, such fellowship can easily deteriorate because it becomes purely human and middle class. It loses all anonymity.

This is not to denigrate house churches, small groups or conventicles. These must be part of the church as well, as must clubs and societies. Communion of the saints takes on many forms. In this sinful world, the fellowship we experience in the church may well be the paradigm – the model or example – and also the centre and starting point for all other forms of fellowship in human life, such as marriage, friendship, in the workplace, in political organizations and so on. Must we not be bound together at our roots in order to relate to one another on the surface? Isn't it in church that we learn to get along with one another on the basis of forgiveness and reconciliation, in the spacious sphere of grace and peace? Without this, when it comes right down to it, aren't we wolves who tear at one another?

Threefold fellowship

It is for this threefold fellowship – with one another, with the Mediator and with the Triune God – that we go to church. This fellowship must be upheld; it must be nourished and strengthened.

Are we incorporated into this fellowship each time anew? That's what the title of this piece seems to suggest. We could also have written: "To experience communion," or: "To sustain the fellowship." But there is something to be said for the title as it stands: "To be engrafted into his body."

'Now I feel like a new person!'

When we eat and drink, for example, do we do so merely to sustain life? Or does it involve something of being born anew? When we come home exhausted after a hard day's work and we are fed a good, home-cooked meal, afterward we lean back and we say, "Aaah! Now I feel like a new person!"

Another thought. The idea of engrafting or incorporation can mean something like 'to make something outwardly visible that is already there in our practical piety'. Spiritual communion comes first; sacramental communion is the visible expression of this communion. In this sense, every worship service is a matter of becoming a member of the body, of being incorporated into the body of Christ.

The primary thing, however, is not this but the threefold fellowship, which is a mystery so great that it cannot be contained in any other structure of human life, whether inward or outward. For this we need the church, which is the form supremely designed for this. The church is the fellowship with the Mediator, with the Triune God and with one another in Christ, and we must keep entering in anew.

This threefold fellowship is not just inward and spiritual, but it has an organizational, institutional structure. Because there are so many churches, this poses problems for many people, and they try to avoid it by saying that the institutional form is not an essential part of the church but something extraneous. To my mind, this is one of the most serious heresies of our time.

The institutional form of the church is closely related to the mediating work and the offices of Christ, for it is his body. The offices of the church and the official structures associated with them are the way Christ rules the church by his Spirit. Nothing less than the actual lordship of the exalted Lord is at stake here.

Getting fully engaged

As long as we cannot muster the courage to join in the visible, public fellowship of the church, a Christian is not fully "engaged". To enter fully in this fellowship, we must publicly profess our faith and then we share in all the joys and sorrows, fruits and frustrations, burdens and bounties of the church. Here we discover numerous things, both beautiful and baneful. We discover, for example, the teachings of the church and church government. We discover the entire spectrum of the church's business, and also – let's not overlook them – a lot of ordinary and bizarre fellow members.

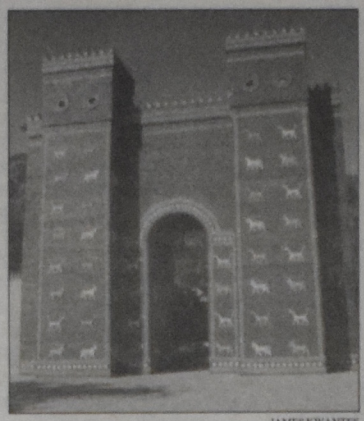
But it is here that we find faith and salvation and are engrafted into fellowship with our Mediator, with the Triune God and with one another.

Opinion/Family

Under the shadow of war: a visit with the people of Iraq

... continued from page 13

to Iraq to evaluate the state of readiness. He undoubtedly encountered the same fatalism that I did among Iraqis, who sprinkle their conversation with the phrase *insh'allah* ("if God wills it"). As if the horrible human consequences that war will unleash on Iraq were not enough to cause all concerned to step back from the brink, the U.S. case against Iraq is riddled with fallacies, unproven assertions and outright deception. There are no documented links between Al-Qaeda and Iraq, and Osama bin Laden has professed his hatred for Saddam Hussein, whom the Al-Qaeda leader regards as a secular and despotic hypocrite who shamelessly uses Islam for political purposes.



JAMES KWANTES

Half-scale replica of the Ishtar Gate in Babylon, which captive Jews would have passed through.

If Iraq is hiding "weapons of mass destruction," it is one of several Middle East states to have chemical and biological weapons programs. The most potent arsenal in the region, of course, is Israel, which is also believed to have 200 nuclear warheads. And certainly a nuclear-armed North Korea must be considered a far more serious threat to world peace than Iraq, which — if it has a nuclear program — is several years away from developing nuclear weapons, by most accounts.

Why is Saddam a threat now?

Finally, what makes Saddam Hussein and Iraq such a dire threat now, 12 years after the end of the Gulf War? Hussein has had more than a decade, with the full backing of a state apparatus, to plot revenge against the U.S., yet he has not been linked to any terrorist attacks against America. The events of Sept. 11, 2001 show that if Hussein had masterminded a devastating attack against the U.S., America's intelligence agencies likely would not have been able to stop it.

One of the most disturbing blind spots in the U.S. "war on terror" is Saudi Arabia. America's main oil supplier and staunch ally, Saudi Arabia is the homeland of Osama bin Laden and 15 of the 19 hijackers. Ruled by a corrupt, repressive royal family, the desert kingdom incubated the virulent Wahabi strain of Islam that motivates bin Laden, and for decades, has exported it to countries around the world, including Pakistan and Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia was one of the Taliban government's staunchest allies, and one of the few governments in the world not to cut ties with Afghanistan after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Yet the United States continues to claim Saudi Arabia as a staunch ally, much as it once did for Saddam Hussein and Iraq. If the United States proclaims victory against Iraq, installs a friendly government and secures a vast new oil supply in the Middle East, relations with Saudi Arabia could chill quickly.

Many reasons to oppose a war

For the Christian, there are myriad reasons to oppose a war against Iraq. A war against Iraq is a war of the strong against the weak, a war of the rich against the poor, a war of a society that has suffered a sharp body blow (Sept. 11, 2001) against one that has been pummeled for decades by war and sanctions.

I'm no preacher, but I think Matt. 25:31-46 is pretty clear-cut on the importance of seeking justice, making peace and sticking up for the weak in society, the voiceless, the marginalized. Surely we who follow the Prince of Peace, who was deeply concerned with peace and justice during his time on earth, must do more than shake our heads and resign ourselves to a war that will be devastating to the people of Iraq.

For more than a decade, ostensibly Christian Western countries have hung on to the morally bankrupt weapon of economic sanctions against Iraq. Instituted as a tool to punish Saddam Hussein, the sanctions have strengthened him and his regime and weakened the Iraqis who rely on economic activity for their bread and butter. If there's a single pattern that repeats itself over and over again in regard to Iraq, it's that every time the United States targets Saddam, it's the ordinary Iraqis who get punished.

The Mennonites and other denominations have done admirable work in speaking out against this state of affairs, but other denominations have been virtually silent. And others, primarily in the United States, have essentially thrown their support behind Bush and his fight against the evil Saddam Hussein!

My visit to Iraq transformed my view of events, and the research I've done since has given me a larger perspective than one gets from watching TV news or reading the newspaper. It has also made me very cynical of stated American goals and statements of concern for the well-being of ordinary Iraqis.

When I read Jesus saying, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me," I see an Iraqi. It might be a disabled veteran of the Iran-Iraq war, a war widow, a child whose growth is stunted because she's not getting the proper nutrition. Maybe it's a woman who has turned to selling her body to make enough money to feed her children. As complex, as grey, as confusing as the political situation gets with Iraq, I believe we are called to work for peace and to do justice.

Finally, if Christians can look at the events of Sept. 11 and wonder how Islam can stand for peace, as most Muslims say it does, surely many Muslims must be listening to Bush and wondering how Jesus Christ could be the Prince of Peace.

For here is a Christian who, as leader of the most powerful nation on earth, seems to thrive on sabre-rattling and threatening, and finally, perhaps war. First Osama bin Laden was in the cross-hairs, "wanted dead or alive," Dubya said. Then, when bin Laden seemed to slip through the dragnet, or apparently disappeared off the face of the earth, the target was shifted to the more familiar ground of Iraq.

There's an inevitability to U.S. war preparations that is depressing to one who has sampled the genuine warmth and hospitality of the Iraqi people and walked in Babylon and Ur. I, for one, will continue praying for a peaceful resolution to the standoff.

CC regional reporter James Kwantes lives in Abbotsford, B.C.

Alone at last

Intangible Things
Heidi VanDerSlikke

Sigmund Freud claimed that in order to flourish emotionally, a person needs two things in life: meaningful work and love. I'd like to add to that list because I think most people, to keep their sanity, also need routine and solitude, (at least this person does). We've just come through the Christmas holiday season, and while it was a wonderful time and I'll miss my children as they return to their schools, I desperately need to get back to some kind of normal routine.

We started Christmas break a week ahead of most people by taking a family vacation to the Dominican Republic. It was heavenly. Day after warm and sunny day we lolled around the beach, loafed by the pools and gorged ourselves at the buffet dinners. We returned to the cold, hard truth of the Canadian winter a couple of days before Christmas.

A blessed, busy, non-productive season

After that, life blurred from one family gathering to the next, a few extra church services and the coming and going of visitors to our home. It was a blessed, busy, totally non-productive season, for which I am profoundly thankful. However, my usually semi-efficient routine became buried somewhere under a pile of wrapping paper, and frankly, most of the time I couldn't even tell you what day of the week it was. Time spent with just my husband became rare, but time all by myself was practically non-existent.

Even as a teenager I needed a certain amount of solitude to function properly. I used to slip out of the house and head for an abandoned railway bridge a couple of miles out into the country. I could easily while away an hour or two out there, dangling my legs over the edge, smoking cigarettes I shouldn't have had, or dropping pebbles into the river below. My mother could never figure out the attraction, but my father understood fully.

Out there, alone except for my canine companion, I'd watch the river flow in the spring, or admire its stillness in the heat of summer. I'd listen to the birds, or marvel at the changing colors of autumn. In the winter I'd lean on the railing and let the snowflakes collect in my hair. There, in sweet solitude I'd dream my dreams without some cranky teacher forcing me back into reality. I'd mull over my problems and reduce my worries to a manageable size, just by giving them the perspective of distance for at least a few minutes. I could cry without answering any questions, or sing right out loud if I felt like it.

Where I felt most connected to God

And it was there on that lonely railway bridge that I felt most connected to God. Evidence of his presence was all around me to see and smell and feel. But even more powerful was the impulse inside me to know who it was that gave me life and why he bothered in the first place. Set apart from the day's distractions I had the chance to really listen to what he was whispering to me all along.

Funny how with all the "free time" of the holiday season it's so hard to find a moment's peace. But sitting here at my desk this morning I can finally put it all into perspective. First I have to clear my head of the image of Harry denEditorguy pacing back and forth in front of the *Christian Courier* fax machine, muttering, "It's Monday. Where's her column?" I replace that picture with thoughts of the people and activities which have filled the past few weeks in such a happy way. I'm grateful for the time to connect with my kids, and visit with relatives and friends. And I'm thankful for the rhythm of a regular routine which allows for time alone, time to think. At last I'm able to ponder the New Year ahead. It stretches out in front of me as bright and unstained as the blanket of freshly fallen snow outside my window. The future, with all its possibilities, joys and challenges is held firmly in the hands of my Maker. He's the same one who used to meet me out on the railway bridge. He still whispers my name, and he remains the reason I can be all alone and never lonely.

Heidi Vanderslikke lives in Harriston, Ont. Her e-mail address is: **vanderslikke@wightman.ca**

Euro-money

Morris Greidanus

Do you remember "traveler's cheques"?

Before a long trip, especially one overseas, cautious travelers would go to the bank for some traveler's cheques. You'd hand the bank the $200 or $500 you wanted to carry (plus their one per cent fee) and they'd hand back a stack of blue and grey $20 or $50 cheques that you'd have to sign in an upper corner — each one of them. Then they'd put them into a narrow blue wallet and instruct you to keep the record of when and where you cashed them in a separate place. When you signed the cheque on the bottom it turned into cash. If the cheques were lost or stolen, you could get your money back. Very safe, and quite convenient, except in places where you wanted your money changed into local currency. Then you could only cash them in a bank, which wanted to see a passport and often had long lunches.

The ATM (automatic teller machine) has done-in the traveler's cheque. Within Canada and the U.S. you can go almost anywhere and get the money you need out of your bank account at home. That's also possible in Europe if your bank card is linked to VISA, MasterCard, or to a network like Cirrus.

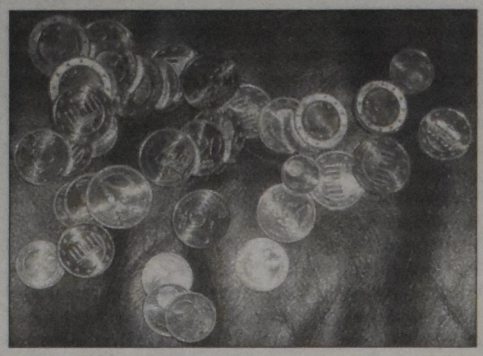
"I have to get some money out of the wall," the Dutch will say. Your bank may have a little fee, but if you get enough at a time the fee is likely less than the one per cent that was charged for travelers cheques, and you get the most favorable exchange rate on local currency. Those ATMs are a handy friend in need.

The euro has arrived

But there's still the juggling act with guldens, lire, francs, U.S. dollars, marks, and Canadian dollars when you travel from place to place. Good news! The euro has arrived.

The euro is now the shared money of most countries in the European Union. No more guldens, or francs, you can use the euro in Holland, or Germany, or France— it has replaced the currency of 15 countries. We recently traveled into France, Italy, the Vatican, and Germany and never had to change money. We could use the euro wherever we went.

Interestingly, the euros look the same on one side in all countries. On that common side they show their value and an EU symbol. But each country has its own design on the other side. The Netherlands shows Queen Beatrix on all the coins. Belgium features King



Albert on all. Germany has three different designs: a leaf on the one-, two-, five-cent pieces, the Brandenburg Gate on the 10-, 20-, 50-cent piece, and an eagle on the one and two euro coins. Ireland has a Celtic harp all over. Italy has a different design on each coin. France has different designs for the three sets. Collecting all this could be "an interesting hobby," as the bookstore owner said to me when I looked for a chart of the different national coins.

A political miracle

But more than an interesting hobby, this numismatic unity in diversity is a political and historical miracle! For in order to use the same currency these countries have to mesh their budgets and economic policies. One country cannot have a deficit while the other has a surplus. The euro is a very visible sign that European unity has come a long way. Co-operation began with the Benelux countries (Belgium, Nederland, Luxemburg), spread to Germany, France, Italy, and beyond. This unity has now reached the point that 60 per cent of the laws affecting the citizens of each country are made in Brussels by the European Parliament.

What would be a good comparison for us? Canadians watch U.S. programs and export Peter Jennings, Shania Twain, Alex Trevek, and Wayne Gretzky. There is free trade, fairly open borders, one language, no recent hostilities. But if we would have one currency, say the "pollay," for the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Cuba, and Japan together, then we would come close to this miracle that we see in our wallets in Europe.

Invisible border

Here in Winterswijk, in this corner of Holland near the German border, Alice and I have biked into Germany several times in our weeks here. No passport or border guards, just a change in the look of the road signs. Dutch shoppers take a bus to Muenster for the Christmas Market. And German shoppers come to Winterswijk for their Wednesday and Saturday market. The marketers can talk and sell in Dutch or in German. But you always pay in that one euro.

The euro-money miracle does have its problems. A major one is fiscal: the monetary policies of each member country have to match. Brussels is leaning on France right now because of its subsidies.

There's also the psychological problem for each citizen to re-think their buying and budgeting in a new currency. It's easy for an American traveler, for the Euro is roughly the same as the U.S. dollar. For the Dutch, however, the Euro is about two-and-a-quarter guilders. Recent reports warn that a number of families are over-spending because the price in euros seems lower. Many also suspect that merchants upped their prices during the conversion to euros.

Rounding up prices

According to the CBC, a recent poll conducted in Europe on the euro, the shared coin that has now been in circulation for one year, reveals that the new bills and coins have led to more inflation because of "rounding up," the upward rounding of prices as shop-owners and businesses converted old currency prices to euro prices.

In the 12 countries that have already converted their currencies, support for the euro was 71 per cent, while in Britain 61 per cent are opposed to the euro.

In countries like Italy, where a cup of coffee was several thousand lire, it's easier for the traveler to know what's being spent. But the conversion hit harder in countries where the euro is a smaller unit than the previous major coin. The Irish Roman Catholic church, for example, issued an encouragement to its members to give two euros at mass rather than the one pound that was their habit. The bishops worried that their collections would be cut in half.

So there's a world of problems, drama, but also wonder in our wallets. I am amazed that former enemies can bury their envy and hate and come together like this. Alice and I were moved to see a plaque in a cathedral in Muenster, Germany which reads "Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors." This cathedral was rebuilt after being bombed by the Allies during World War II; it exchanged matching plaques with the cathedral in Coventry, England, bombed by Germans during the war. It's good to see reconciliation in a church. It's stunning to see international healing right on the money.

Morris Greidanus is a Canadian-American living in Grand Rapids, Mich. This week, he writes from Winterswijk, the Neth.

The hidden culture of girls' aggression

Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls

by Rachel Simmons (New York: Harcourt, Inc. 2002)

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In *Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls* Simmons' extensive research reveals that "girls' conflicts run deep under the ground like the roots of an old tree." She points an accusatory finger at North American culture which, she says, "refuses girls access to open conflict" and "forces their aggression into non-physical, indirect and covert forms."

Working with a total of 10 schools over a period of one year, Simmons conducted individual and group interviews with students, staff, and parents who showed an interest in her research. The girls she spoke with were between the ages of 10 and 14, the years when bullying peaks. Also, by phone or in person, she interviewed approximately 50 adult women whose lives were irrevocably scarred by severe bullying episodes.

Fear of isolation

As she spoke to females of varying ages, Simmons repeatedly heard what psychologist Carol Gilligan's research maintains — that girls "perceive danger in their lives as isolation." Simmons says, "In a world that socializes girls to prize relationships and care above all else, the fear of isolation and loss casts a long shadow over girls' decisions around conflicts, driving them away from direct confrontation."

Not wanting to openly antagonize their enemies, girls use what psychologists at the University of Minnesota identified as subcategories of aggressive behavior: relation- al, indirect, and social aggression. Throughout her book, Simmons refers to these behaviors as alternative aggressions.

What shape do alternative aggressions take in girl bullying? Among others, Simmons mentions: employing silent treatment; spreading rumors; ganging up against a girl; gesturing non-verbally; using humor subtly and maliciously; walking down a hallway and slamming into a girl; rolling eyes at a victim; sending an instant message with a new user name; or stealing a boyfriend.

Also, girls use friendship as a "weapon" in order to remain a part of the popular group. Though the word bully conjures up pictures of an enemy, in the culture of girls' hidden aggression, Simmons says, "it is often the closest girlfriends

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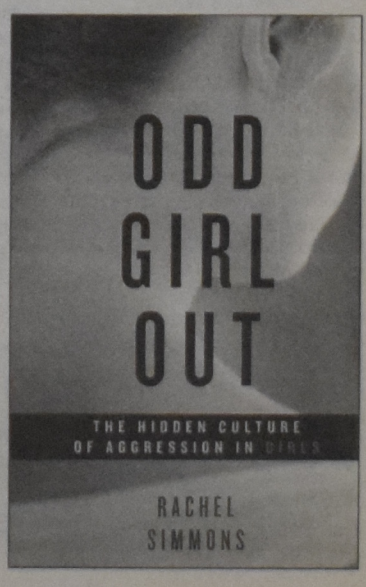

News Analysis/Book Review

Dance at my funeral

Emily Geertsma Klooster

Here's something you don't hear very often: I went to an amazing funeral last week. It was a celebration of the life of Dan Steven, almost 26 years old, who passed on to be with God in the early morning of December 6. Dan, a street musician and poet from London, Ontario battled a brain tumor for 3½ years before his death.

Dan left specific instructions about what he wanted to happen at his memorial service: "I want you to dance at my funeral," he sang in a song he had written years before all of this happened, "I want you to celebrate your life!"

Music embodied Dan's spiritual intensity

This is just what those who loved Dan dearly did, and his funeral became what he had wanted it to be. It was not a mournful occasion, but a celebration of the life God had given him.

First, a little background on Dan. One of his most powerful attributes was his love for music and his understanding of the emotional power music can have. Dan's own music was intricately connected to his love for God. Music embodied Dan's spiritual intensity — something which, after meeting him, was impossible to miss.

At age 17, he made it known to family and friends that he wanted to be a musician and a recording artist. Born and raised in Ontario, Dan made a few local connections that led him to a Toronto producer named Doug Romanow.

Soon after being diagnosed with a brain tumor, Dan made his first album entitled "Beggars and Kings", reviewed in the *Christian Courier* in 2000. The album included the song "Dance At My Funeral". This song would prove more meaningful than anyone thought at the time. Dan said to his mother that it came to him on the beaches of Lake Huron, well before his diagnosis, and he had inscribed the lyrics into the sand.

Much has happened since that day on a Lake Huron beach. Over the past 3½ years, Dan spent his time playing guitar and singing on the streets of London, Newfoundland, and Jerusalem. He recorded a second album, entitled *Voices From God*, devoted in part to his yearning for heaven and his union with God. And on Friday, Dec. 6, Dan's desires were fulfilled when he passed on to another world. On that morning, snow gently fell exactly as it had on the day of his birth almost 26 years ago.

All of this is only a slice of Dan's story — a simple introduction. But now it may be easier for one to understand the events that unfolded at his "amazing" funeral.

The service took place at First CRC in London, and the bulletin described Dan well: "Traveler, friend, poet, wacky singer-songwriter, prophet, pilgrim, respecter of angels...disciple of Jesus, hugger of trees...". The bulletin declared, "Dan Steven is Oceans Away Playing Music." It is apparent solely from these words that Dan was a unique person, and someone who had a profound effect on those who knew him, even on those he had recently met.

Sunflowers surrounded Dan's casket, and on top of it sat a framed photo of Dan smiling and flashing the peace sign with two fingers.

An eclectic mix of people sat in the pews. Dread-locked young men with tattered clothes sat alongside elderly couples in suits and dresses. This congregation of Dan's friends and family represented the many people and communities he effected throughout his young, full life. Everything about Dan's funeral was permeated with his personality: carefree, contemplative, full of joy.

At one point in the service, we listened to a recording of the hymn "How Great Thou Art" which Dan had made when he was 16 as a present for his mother's birthday. We were reminded of a day when we might see Dan again, as he sang the words, "When Christ shall come, with shouts of acclamation, to claim his own, what joy shall fill my heart!"

Later on in the service the microphone was offered to Dan's family, who spoke of his ability to sleep through family gatherings while still remaining the coolest, guitar-toting cousin amongst them. They may not have always understood his free-spirited ways, but their respect for him was obvious.

After family members had finished, Dan's friends began to come up one by one. A young man shared that when he met Dan he had been depressed for a long time. "Dan showed me what love was," he said. Another man said that Dan would often shock those around him by going to the bar and talking passionately about God over a beer.

'Friendly neighborhood Dan'

A woman went up and said Dan had shown her how to forgive. Another man, already in tears, said he hadn't known Dan very well, but knew him only as "friendly neighborhood Dan" — someone who went from house to house in London spreading his cheerful disposition to everyone he could find. Not only did Dan give away his love, but also his clothing, shoes, food and money to anyone he thought needed it more than he.

Already Dan's funeral had been a powerful witness to his life in Christ, but the best part was yet to come. The pastor announced that we were about to listen to another one of Dan's songs, and that, yes, we were going to dance! But no one thought we would dance like we did.

Out of the speakers trickled Dan's voice, singing "I want you to dance at my funeral..." set to a rousing accordian track. A few began to sway gently, but soon others were twirling around gleefully in the balcony and a circle formed at the front of the church. Everyone joined hands and kicked up their heels, even if it was through a blur of tears. People clapped and sang along, and laughter rang through the entire church. Those passing the church on the sidewalks would never have guessed a funeral was going on inside.

As the funeral celebration came to a close, people left the sanctuary to one of Dan's new songs with smiles on their faces. The words are, "Jordan, flow to the sea. Jordan, wash over me." This was a song he had written while crossing the Jordan River in Israel.

Dan's funeral represented his life beautifully. He was an intense young man, in love with God and a firm believer in angels. Dan was determined to touch as many people as he could with God's love, and he had a spiritual intelligence to be envied.

Our loss of Dan is great. He showed so many Christ's love, quite literally giving away everything he owned, bringing up God's love in casual bar conversation, and singing of it in the streets at the top of his voice.

Dan will not be forgotten by any who knew him, however briefly. Wonderfully for us, his music remains. The world lost more than it knows on Dec. 6, but the voice of Dan Steven still rings though our homes and through the streets of London, Ontario.

I want you to dance at my funeral.
I want you to celebrate your life.
Yeah, I want you to dance at my funeral
In this way you remember me, remember me
And you keep my light alive.

Don't you shed your tears for me baby
'Cause I'll be dancin' with the angels in the sky.
Yeah, my Jesus he's gonna save me,
My Jesus he's gonna dry your eyes.

Yeah, death's nothin' more than a doorway
A doorway home to the Light.
By His grace we'll be there someday.
Until then, keep your torch burnin' bright.

Dan Steven

You can find Dan's CD's at **www.cdbaby.com/dansteven**

The hidden culture of girls' aggression

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who are caught in protracted episodes of emotional abuse."

Simmons maintains that adults aren't always aware of girls' alternative aggressions because they are often invisible. Therefore, though parents and teachers often deal swiftly and directly with boys' more visible aggression, they fail to tackle girls' bullying. The consequences can be enormous for the victim. Not only does she experience increasing isolation at school and in her social life, but the adults in her life are unaware of her emotional pain.

Internalizing the problem

Simmons discovered that many girls refused to talk to their parents about being bullied because they felt confused about what was happening to them. She says they were unable "to identify what they're experiencing as wrong or punishable. Instead, they internalize the problem as their fault and never speak of it."

When girls did have the courage to talk to their parents, Simmons discovered that many parents said the wrong thing in response. She outlines how parents should approach their daughters. For example, instead of saying, "It happens to everyone," parents could say, "That is so terrible. I'm sorry." Or, instead of saying, "What could you be doing to cause this?" parents could say, "Do you want to brainstorm together about how we got here?" In both cases, the better answer shows that parents empathize with their victimized daughters and want to empower them to discover a solution to the problem.

Because Simmons came "to believe that the alternative aggressions in which girls engage are half-hearted, unsatisfying forms of communication, that they do not satiate the universal human need to express anger, and that they should not be the only avenue of expression available to girls," she makes concrete suggestions for parents and educators to deal with the problem.

Regulation and education are avenues for change, Simmons suggests. By introducing "new, more inclusive anti-bullying language into school policy" and changing existing rules so that they "prohibit specific behaviors such as rumor spreading, alliance building, secret telling, and severe episodes of nonverbal aggression," harassment and bullying will be curbed. She cites Washington State lawmakers who, in 2001, introduced legislation requiring schools to adopt anti-bullying policies. Simmons asks, "How can a teacher create a classroom culture that treats alternative and direct aggressions equally?" She suggests that among all the life skills children are taught, teachers must educate them to understand that alternative aggressions are never acceptable behaviors. "Banning these behaviors and socializing girls away from them should become as important as any other lesson in citizenship or morality," she asserts.

Simmons directs readers to two organizations that have taken on the tasks of regulation and education. The Ophelia Project, named after Mary Pipher's book, *Reviving Ophelia*, is the U.S.'s "first organization to develop anti-bullying curricula using research on relational aggression." Also, the Empower Program, based in Washington, D.C., has developed programs for boys and girls which "focus on interpersonal boundary-setting, conflict management, and relationship violence."

Besides encouraging parents and teachers to initiate changes, Simmons speaks directly to girls. She emphatically states, "We need to abandon the belief that doing this is natural or unavoidable. It isn't. We can change."

Though Simmons' book is informative and thought-provoking, Christians will miss two crucial elements in her thinking. She addresses neither sin's destructive power in human relationships, nor God's redeeming grace that allows victims to find healing from past pain and the courage to forgive their oppressors. In her interviews with adult women, it was clear that many were stuck in their bitterness and never expected to experience healing.

News Comment

Nose for News

Bert Hielema

THERE IS SOME GOOD news out there. Not much, but some, so let me start the year off on a positive note.

Next time you feel ticker trouble, consider a visit to your local Liquor Store; it might be better for your health than a trip to the drugstore. Thirty years of research has convinced many experts that it is healthy to drink in moderation — just as it is healthy to eat in moderation. A drink or two a day of wine or beer or whiskey or any drink containing alcohol is often the best non-prescription way to prevent heart attacks — better than a low fat diet or weight loss, better even than vigorous exercise.

Moderate drinking can help prevent strokes, amputated limbs and dementia. True, it can also slightly increase the risk of breast cancer in women. Nevertheless, all over the world moderate drinkers have healthier hearts than teetotalers. Translated into life-span, temperate drinkers live considerably longer and enjoy life more.

The Bible says repeatedly that wine gladdens the heart, which may have a double meaning. That Jesus' first recorded miracle was making wine must have some significance as well.

Studies on more than 80,000 American women have shown that those who had no more than one daily drink had only half the heart attacks of those who did not drink at all, even if they are slim, did not smoke and exercised daily. Moderate drinking was about as good as an hour of exercise a day. Not drinking at all was as bad for the heart as obesity.

Wine is not alone in this effect. Japanese and German beer drinkers and North Americans who drink their liquor hard equally benefit. Says Dr. Eric Rimm, an associate professor of epidemiology and nutrition at the Harvard School of Public Health (quoted in the *New York Times*): "If you step back, the data show that alcohol is beneficial in all three beverages."

But... there is a downside to drinking too much. For women, it means increased risk of breast cancer. It raises the risk of high blood pressure, heart failure and half a dozen forms of cancer. Heavy drinking may cause diabetes, pancreatic and liver failure as well as dementia. Heavy drinkers have a much higher mortality rate, exacerbated by more car accidents and violent deaths.

So, do the advantages outweigh the benefits? That's a question you have to decide. I am a moderate drinker: a bit of wine or sherry or a touch of Baileys almost every day.

TALKING ABOUT DRINKING: Europe certainly believes in it. It also believes in Global Warming. I recently returned from Europe where I visited a brother who lives immediately below the dike which holds the North Sea in check. At least that's what he hopes. The European Union has just approved two important measures to deal with weather change: a cap on carbon emissions from fossil fuels and the trading of emissions allowances, to begin in 2005.

The United States will postpone any such measures till 2012, and then only through voluntary greenhouse gas reductions. Europe knows it must do something: Europeans have maximized their useable land area, and their population density is eight times that of the U.S.A. This makes them extremely vulnerable.

This past week I heard warnings about floods all over Europe. In England, the Thames River barrier, built to protect London and central great Britain from storm surges and high tides, had until recently closed only two or three times a year. In the five months from November 2001 to March 2002 the engineers had to raise the barrier 23 times to protect London and other low areas from flooding. If this continues, this barrier won't be enough: a report calculates that 130,000 square km around one of the world's largest cities are vulnerable to flooding.

The same is true on the Continent: Hamburg, Dresden and Prague, all major historic centres, have suffered major damage from floods, affecting rail lines, subways, airports, roads, and costing billions of dollars to repair. No wonder Europeans take global warming seriously and why they are furious at George W. Bush.

Washington's agenda is very short-term, wanting to satisfy three constituencies: the economic conservatives, primarily interested in lower taxes and fewer environmental constraints; the social conservatives, in favor of killer guns and deadly set against abortion; and the macho militarists who want to rule the world through the sword.

THE U.S.A. SUFFERS from fear. Fear of terrorists. Fear of Muslims. Fear of strangers. Fear of inflation. Fear of deflation. Fear of losing employment. Fear of growing old without health coverage. Ignorance leads to fear. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to violence. Violence leads to war. War is inherently destructive.

Saddam Hussein will fight the next war to maximize destruction, which will have to be repaired at the expense of the American taxpayer. After the Gulf War, oil spilled into the Persian Gulf and killed thousands of birds. Its toxic residue will affect fisheries in the Gulf for over 100 years. As much as six million barrels of oil a day — almost ten per cent of the world's daily consumption in 1991 — went up in toxic smoke from 600 wells set ablaze by retreating Iraqi troops. Some of this oil spilled on land, forming huge pools.

One oil lake in southern Kuwait was a half mile long and 25 feet deep in places, containing nine times as much oil as the Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska. The Gulf War deposited soot, sulphur and acid rain on crop lands up to 1,200 miles in all directions, making fertile fields untillable and leading to food shortages that continue to this day. Oil that did not burn traveled on the wind in the form of nearly invisible droplets resulting in an oil mist that poisoned trees and cattle, contaminating fresh water supplies and settling in the lungs of people and animals throughout the Gulf region.

And the men and women that fought the first Gulf War? "Out of the 700,000 U.S. soldiers serving there, 118,000 are suffering from chronic fatigue, headaches, muscles spasms, joint pains, anxiety, memory loss and balance problems," writes Conn Hallinan, provost at the University of California in Santa Cruz. "Gulf vets are twice as likely to develop Lou Gehrig's Disease and two or three times more likely to have children with birth defects. Modern battlefields are saturated with Depleted Uranium Ammunition and other chemicals."

ALL THIS MAY SOON BE repeated. Perhaps in an expanded version. Here's why. Korea, far away, has gone nuclear. South Korea, an important ally where 37,000 U.S. troops are stationed, has elected a new president, less friendly to the U.S.A. Oil-rich Venezuela is on strike, shut down because of internal discontent with its democratically elected president. The U.S.A. gets 14 per cent of its oil from this country. This has now stopped.

These problems need the immediate attention of the U.S.A., but this is impossible as long as Bush is fixated on Iraq. Iraq is so important to the U.S.A., because: (1) Saddam Hussein is unpredictable and potentially a powerful ally for al Qaeda. (2) All wars have a psychological component. The Islamic world believes that America is incapable of fighting a war to a definite conclusion. (3) Iraq's location is very strategic: it borders Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Iran, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. An occupied Iraq gives U.S. forces the opportunity to wage war throughout the region and makes it possible to control the price and supply of oil.

Both Venezuela and the possible disruption caused by a war in the Middle East have increased the price of oil at a time when the world economy is already fragile. Bush's weak point is the economy. Oil needs to flow to the U.S.A. without let-up and the cheaper the better.

All this suggests that the war must begin in the next four weeks and must be concluded quickly. If not, matters will get out of hand on a global scale. Not only will the price of oil skyrocket, but world-wide we might see new alliances: a globe with four big players: North America, Europe, oil-rich Islam and an Alliance of China, Japan and a unified Korea. These three Northeast Asian powers not only share a geographic location, but also a common cultural heritage not very different from the kind of common natural bond the West European countries have.

The possibility exists that this war will cripple the North American economy. The Washington administration is blindly reducing taxes, making mostly the rich richer and risking ever larger budget deficits. With diminishing tax revenues and growing expenditures for basically non-productive military ends, combined with an out-of-control foreign balance of payments situation, and a historically high personal and corporate debt load, the value of the dollar might decrease rapidly, especially as the U.S. taxpayer is on the hook for all damage done in Iraq. With oil prices increasing no matter what the outcome, stagflation and even depression might be the result.

Unjust wars solve nothing. Especially if the reason is to get a cheaper and more secure supply of oil. They only destroy humans lives and valuable assets in a world already threatened with ecological disasters — floods, typhoons, global warming.

Enough to drive even a sane person to drink more than the health-enhancing one or two drinks a day.

Bert Hielema ran, biked, walked 2,113 km in 2002, averaging almost 6 km per day. Not bad for an old man.

PIER 21, HALIFAX

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BRITISH COLUMBIA

Burns Lake – CFLD	9:15 am	1400
Osoyoos – CJOR	8:00 am	1490
Penticton - CKOR	8:00 am	800
Port Alberni – CJAV	7:00 pm	1240
Prince George – CIRX	7:00 am	94.3
Princeton – CHOR	8:00 am	1400
Smithers – CFBV	9:15 am	1230
Summerland – CHOR	8:00 am	1450
Vernon – CJIB	9:30 pm	940

ALBERTA

Brooks – CIBQ	8:30 am	1340
Ft. McMurray – CJOK	8:30 am	1230
High River – CHRB	6:30 pm	1140
Edmonton – CJCA	6:00 pm	930
Westlock – CFOK	7:30 am	1370

SASKATCHEWAN

Estevan – CJSL	8:00 am	1280
Weyburn – CFSL	8:00 am	1190

MANITOBA

Altona – CFAM	9:30 am	950
Steinbach – CHSM	9:30 am	1250
Winnipeg – CKJS	9:00 am	810

ONTARIO

Atikokan – CFAK	9:30 am	1240
Chatham – CFCO	6:30 am	630
Fort Frances – CFOB	9:30 am	640
Guelph – CJOY	8:30 am	1460
Hamilton – CHAM	7:30 am	820
Kapuskasing – CKAP	7:00 am	580
London – CKSL	7:00 am	1410
Oshawa – CKDO	8:00 am	1350
Owen Sound – CFOS	7:00 am	560
Pembroke – CHVR	10:00 am	96.7
Sarnia – CHOK	7:30 am	1070
Stratford – CJCS	8:45 am	1240
Windsor – CKLW	7:30 am	800
Wingham – CKNX	10:30 am	920

NEW BRUNSWICK

Saint John – CHSJ	9:00 am	94.1

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Charlottetown – CFCY	7:00 am	630

NOVA SCOTIA

Bridgewater – CKBW	7:30 am	1000
Digby – CKDY	6:00 am	1420
Halifax – CFDR	8:30 am	780
Liverpool – CKBW	7:30 am	94.5
Kentville – CKEN	8:30 am	1490
Middleton – CKAD	8:30 am	1350
New Glasgow – CKEC	7:30 am	1320
Shelburne – CKBW	7:30 am	93.1
Sydney – CJCB	7:00 am	1270
Weymouth – CKDY	8:30 am	103.1
Windsor – CFAB	8:30 am	1450

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Lethbridge – CJIL
Thursday – 9:00 am
Saturday – 2:00 am

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Saturday – 7:30 pm

Check your local listings for cable outlets airing *Primary Focus*

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Christian Courier is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, thirteen days prior to publication date.

RATES

All personal and family announcements: $16.00 per column inch (P.I.) + GST (columns are two inches wide). Display advertising re.: businesses and organizations: minimum $18.20 P.I. + GST, depending on design and frequency.

PHOTOS

There is a processing fee of $25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged P.I., but we reserve the right to determine published photo size. Please note that we cannot use a faxed photo. We need either an original (which we will return) or a downloadable Internet image.

PERSONAL ADS

Christian Courier would be pleased to handle your personal ad in an efficient and discreet manner. The cost to set up a personal file under a unique file number is $35. Ads requesting correspondence with this file are run at $16 P.I. per insertion. All correspondence is immediately forwarded unopened.

NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS

We offer a $25 one-year subscription to couples whose wedding is announced in *Christian Courier* and to parents who announce the birth of a child in our paper. Please let us know when placing your ad that you want to take advantage of this offer.

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Mail: *Christian Courier*
1 Hiscott St.
St. Catharines, ON L2R 1C7
fax: 905-682-8313
Email: accounts@christiancourier.ca

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a) *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format and editing style.
b) Please provide us with clear copy. *Christian Courier* is not responsible for any errors due to hand written or phoned-in advertisements.

Birthday

With thanksgiving and praise to God for His faithfulness, we hope to celebrate the 90th birthday of our mother,

Elizabeth Horlings

on January 15, 2003.
Much love from your children:
Harry & Jane Horlings
George & Audrey Horlings
Anita & Joe Sikma
Ken & Joan Horlings
Richard & Eleanor Horlings
Love also from your 19 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.
An open house will be held in Holland Marsh Christian Reformed Church on Sat. Jan. 18, 2003 from 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. Best wishes only please.
Home address:
7900 McLaughlin Rd. Apt. #106
Brampton, ON L6Y 5A7

Anniversaries

With praise and thanksgiving to God
BILL and MARY VERMEER
look forward to celebrating, with their children and grandchildren, their
50th Wedding Anniversary

An Open House will be held on Sat. January 25th, from 2:30-5:30 p.m. at Kittling Ridge Winery Inn, 4 Windward Drive, Grimsby.
Best Wishes Only Please.

1943 January 14 2003
Dehier Brampton

Great is thy Faithfulness
With joy and thanksgiving, we celebrate the 60th wedding anniversary of our parents:

WILLEM and PAULA VANDERMEER
(nee Mast)

On Jan 18, 2003 an open house is being held from 2:00 till 4:00 at Holland Christian Homes (Harmony Hall).
Thankful children and grandchildren:
Nick & Antoinette VanderMeer
Whitby
Elena, Corrinna, Angie
Ary & Martha VanderMeer - *Stayner*
Willem & Amanda, Glen, John, Matthew, Andy
Evelyn & Pim Boekestyn
Niagara-on-the-Lake
Pauline, Nicole, Mandy, Peter
Home address: Hope Tower Apt 713, 7900 McLaughlin Rd.
Brampton ON L6V 5A7

1953 February 11 2003

Thankful to God for His faithfulness,

FRED and MARGARETH SLOTMAN

invite family and friends to celebrate our 50th Wedding Anniversary.
An Open House will be held Saturday, February 8, 2003 from 2 - 4 p.m.
Covenant Christian School
6470 Regional Rd. #14
Smithville, Ont.

Rejoicing with us, our children and grandchildren.
Hennie Grootens (†Gerrit)
Gert, Eric & Martiene
Rhea & Bill Brunsveld
Kevin, Meredith, Sarah & friend
Betty & Albert Hovingh
Bernice & Tim Robson
Thomas, Jenn, Erin, Micheal
Best Wishes Only.
Home Address:
169 West St. Box 794
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

Hoogeveen Brampton
1937 January 1 2003

With thanks to God we celebrate the 65th wedding anniversary of

ANNE & ZWAANTINA DE BOER
(Kok)

John & Nell
Betsy & Ross
Bruce & Chris
Theo & Mary
Gerritt & Nancy
Margret & Harry
grandchildren and great-grandchildren
Home Address:
Holland Christian Homes,
7900 McLaughlin Rd. PT 1302
Brampton, ON L6Y 3N2

Golden Anniversary
Congratulations Mom and Dad

CLARENCE and SYA DYKSTRA
(nee: Vanderloo)

We would like to thank God for our parents, parent in-laws and grandparents who are celebrating 50 years of marriage on January 30, 2003.
"Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies." Psalm 36:5

We are blessed to have them and hope that they will be with us for many more years.
From your children:
Peter & Linda Dykstra
Timothy, Talitha
Harry & Marina Dykstra
Joshua, Shane, Caleb
JoAnn & John Fekkes
Chris, Jackie & Michael Andrews, Michael, Nicholas
Clarence & Ingrid Dykstra
Jason, Rachel, Denice, Stephanie
Helen & Alec Kononiuk
Jake
There will be an open house from 2 to 4 PM on February 1, 2003 in Holland Christian Homes in the Mustard Seed.
Home Address:
7900 McLaughlin Rd. South
703 Providence Tower
Brampton, Ontario L6Y 5A7
Phone #: 905-456-1445

Berghuizen (Dr.) Drayton, Ont.
1948 January 30 2003

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." Ps. 23:1

With much joy and thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father, we are happy to announce the 55th Wedding Anniversary of our dear parents, grandparents & great-grandparents

LUCAS and LAMMIGUE MULDER
(nee Steenbergen)

It is our prayer that God will continue to bless you both, and grant you health and happiness, to enjoy many more years together.
Congratulations Dad and Mom, Opa and Oma.
With Love
Ralph & Mary Mulder - *Wainfleet, ON*
Carolyn & Dwayne
(Braydon, Damian, Shannon)
Sheila & Jason
(Alyssa, Ashley, Caleb)
Sheri
Fred & Aly Mulder - *Brucefield, ON*
Laura & Dan (Koldan, Aliyah)
Rita & Warren, Jan (Alana)
Lucia
Pete & Birget Mulder - *Leduc, AB*
Ben, Dan, Bethany, Annalies, Joshua
Tony & Jane Mulder - *Drayton, ON*
Luke, Angela & Mike (Alison, Laney, Alexis), Herman, Lisa
Harry & Margaret Mulder
Moorefield, ON
David, Anna Lee, Melissa, Harry, Suzanne, Rebecca
Luke & Willeke Mulder - *Arthur, ON*
Monique, Michelle
Tina & Henry Valkenburg
Blackstock, ON
Amy, Erica, Janelle, Mark
Tim & Cheryl Mulder - *Wroxeter, ON*
Luke, Brittany, Lauren, Zachery, Jessalynn
Arnold & Sharon Mulder
Moorefield, ON
Brooke, Brent, Ryan
Home Address: Box 418, Main St. E.
Drayton, ON N0G 1P0

Personal

I am a 29 year old Christian female seeking a 29-34 year-old Christian male who has strong Christian values.
Reply to: **Box 2735, 1 Hiscott St., St. Catharines, ON L2R 1C7**

Obituaries

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies" John 11:25

Jan. 13, 1928 Dec. 28, 2002

In His infinite love and mercy, the Lord took unto Himself His child

GILBERT ZEKVELD

Predeceased by his loving wife Geertje Buma (††1988) and an infant daughter (††1952)
Lovingly remembered by
Children and grandchildren:
Betty & Solano Portela - *Brazil*
David, Grace, Daniel, Darius
Dennis & Andrea Zekveld - *Janetville*
Gilbert, Robert, Jonathan
Nellie & Chris Lensch - *Tacoma, WA*
Ruth and Jeff,
Karin, Carissa, Benjamin
Simon & Kathy Zekveld - *Lindsay*
Michael, Lisa, Becky
George & Cherrie Zekveld - *Lindsay*
Jeffrey, Timothy, Darlene, Angela
Brothers and sisters:
Patricia & Andy Hiemstra, *Bowmanville*
George (††1982) & Dorothy Zekveld (††1997)
Helena & John Wybenga, *Smithville*
Arie & Martina Zekveld, *Norwich*
John & Maatje Zekveld, *Bowmanville*
Jacob & Ada Zekveld, *Wyoming*
Nephews and nieces
Address of correspondence:
George Zekveld
25 Maryknoll Ave
Lindsay, ON K9V 1A7

March 17, 1922 January 1, 2003
Westerbork, Drenthe Drayton, Ont.
The Netherlands Canada

James 1:17

On Wednesday morning, January 1, 2003, the Lord took home peacefully our much loved wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother:

FEMMIGJE (FEMMIE) KATERBERG

Much loved wife of William Katerberg for more than 51 years. Predeceased by son Peter in 1974.
Loving mother, grandmother and great-grandmother of:
Sharon & Jim Payton
Mount Hope, Ontario
Chris & Liza Davis - Joshua
Georgetown, Ontario
Trevor & Erin - *Grand Rapids, MI*
Jessica - *Hamilton, Ontario*
Christopher - *Hamilton, Ontario*
John & Heather Katerberg
Drayton, Ontario
George Katerberg - *Alma, Ontario*
Janet Katerberg - *Drayton, Ontario*
Andrew & Willemien Katerberg
Alma, Ontario

Funeral service was held January 6, 2003, in the Drayton Christian Reformed Church, with Rev. G. Bomhof officiating.

Correspondence address:
W. Katerberg
81 Wood St., Unit 5
Box 104
Drayton, Ontario N0G 1P0

Classifieds

Apr. 5, 1913 Dec. 23, 2002
Rozenburg Burlington, ON
Zuid Holland Canada

"I lift my eyes to the hills -
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth."
Psalm 121

Peacefully and full of years, God took home our dear mother, grandmother and great-grandmother.

ADRIANA GROENEWEGEN
(nee Voorberg)

Predeceased by her husband Cornelis (1994) and two sisters and three brothers. Mom was dearly loved and will be missed by all her family.

Ted & Jane Groenewegen
Burlington, ON
Ida Jane, Neil & Ilse, George, Audrey & Karl
Nellie & John Schuurman
Burlington, ON
Derek & Carine, Peter & Joy, Timothy & Patricia, Daniel, Christopher & Sandra
Jackie & Gerald Hogeterp
Woodstock, ON
Henry & Ardell, Michael & Michelle, Paul & Stacia, Jane & Dan
John & Aria Groenewegen
London, ON
Marian & Ward Hann – *Markham, ON*
Sam
Louisa and Bob Bruinsma
Edmonton, AB
Ann Louisa, Kathryn, David
Earl Groenewegen & Mary Gerritsma
Toronto, ON
Myra
and 18 great-grandchildren.

Correspondence to:
Nellie Schuurman
1239 Havendale Blvd
Burlington,ON L7P 3S1

HENK BREIMER

On December 25th 2002, after a brief illness, Riek's devoted husband of 52 years and our precious loving father was taken home to be with his Lord at the age of 78. He will be sadly missed, as he lived a humble life of kind and gentle service to many.

"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty." (Psalm 91:1)

He is lovingly remembered by his dear wife Riek and his children, Jane († with the Lord) and George Antoniak, Marg and Gus Westra, Theo and Mary, John and Elly, Ed and Joann, his many grandchildren and his brother and sisters, Jan and Lammie, Herman (†) and Roelien, Aletta and Jacob Smit, Attie and Wim (†) Reinders, Jan Tibbe (†) and Alie, Hendrikus (†) and Janny, Jannie and Sikko (†) Steendam, Max and Ida and Dineke (†).

The funeral service celebrating his life on earth and his new home in Heaven was held at The Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Brockville on Saturday December 28. Interment followed at Oakland Cemetery.

August 25, 1934 - December 23, 2002

" I have called you by name.
You are mine... "Isaiah 43:1

In His time, God took home our dear husband, father and grandfather.

TIM BUISMAN

Beloved husband of Mieke (Steringa).
Dearly loved by his children:
John & Grace (Weening)
Perry & Corinne (Van de Wetering)
Ken & Iona (Stewart)
Mike
Loved and greatly missed by his grandchildren:
Scott, Greg, Julie, David, Ryan, Laura, Chad
A memorial service was held at the Second Christian Reformed Church, Brampton on December 27, 2002.
Pastor Dirk Evans officiated.
Correspondence address:
Mieke Buisman
30 Marsden Cres.
Brampton, ON L6W 2X1

SHEILA BEVAART

On the morning of Tuesday, December 24, 2002, the Lord in his great mercy took home our dearly beloved sister, sister-in-law, and aunt, Sheila Bevaart, at the age of 71.
Loving sister of Joanne and her husband, Bill Van Dommelen, Adriana and her husband, Nelis Lugtigheid, John (Georgetown, Ont.), Art and his wife Lydia (Bristish Columbia). Dear sister-in-law fo Herma Bevaart, Marie Bevaart, and their children in the Netherlands. She will be sadly missed by all her family and friends.
The funeral service was held Saturday, December 28, 2002 at the Immanuel Christian Reformed Church, Brampton, Ontario.

Job Opportunity

LONDON, ON
Faith Community Christian School is an interdenominational Christian School (JK-8) with a student body of approximately 90 students and a dynamic staff.
We are currently seeking applications for the position of **Principal** for the school year starting September 2003.
Qualified applicants should include their statement of faith, curriculum vitae, educational philosophy, transcripts and names of three references.
Please submit applications to:
Faith Community Chr. Sch.
Attn: Tracy Jollymore
7 Howard Ave.
London, ON N6P 1B3
Or email us at: info@fccs.on.ca
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Job Opportunities

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write: Faith Fellowship CRC
Box 871, Fairview, Alberta T0H 1L0
or email: vanderja@telusplanet.net

BRAMPTON, ONT
John Knox Christian School, Brampton, Ontario, invites applications for a **principal**, beginning **August 1, 2003**. The school has approximently 315 students from JK to grade 8. We are looking for someone with a solid reformed perspective and th ability to relate to Christians from a variety of denominational backgrounds. Check our web site for more information about our school. Please direct application and/or questions to:
Ms. Deb Douma, chairperson
Administrative Search Committee
82 Mclaughlin Road St.
Brampton, ON L6Y 2C7
Tel: 905-874--9713
Fax: 905-451-7604
E-mail: jddouma@rogers.com

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Evaluation of applications will continue until the positions are filled. To learn more about a position and receive application materials, qualified persons committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and curriculum vita/resume to:

Dr. Rockne McCarthy
V. P. for Academic Affairs
Dordt College
498 4th Ave. NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697

Fax: 712 722-4496
E-mail: vpaa@dordt.edu
Web site: www.dordt.edu/offices/acadaff

Dordt College is an equal opportunity institution that strongly encourages the applications of women, minorities, and disabled persons.

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Join the excitement in Simcoe County!

In anticipation of our September 2004 opening, the Simcoe County Christian High School Association (member O.A.C.S.) is seeking a

PRINCIPAL/ADMINISTRATOR

to partner with the Board of Directors and its standing committees in laying the foundation for our school to be located in **Barrie, Ontario**.

During the 2003-2004 academic year, the Principal/Administrator will outline policy, develop programs, liase with feeder schools, strengthen visibility in the community, solicit financial support, promote enrolment, and enlist staff.

This is a unique opportunity for an articulate leader to bring creativity, faith and vision to a young organization that has the strong support of its surrounding communities.

Please direct inquiries and/or an application package including a recent statement of Educational Philosophy to:

S.C.C.H.S
c/o 41 Peacock Lane
Barrie, ON L4N 3R7

Ph: 705-727-9242 application deadline: Jan. 25,2003.

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Vice President for Academic Affairs
3233 Burton Street SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
(616) 957-7194
E-mail: demh@calvin.edu
Fax: (616) 957-8621

Deadline for applications is **March 31, 2003**

Applicants and nominees must be wholeheartedly committed to the Three Forms of Unity and to the polity of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

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Please forward your resume, supporting documents, Statement of Faith, and Philosophy of Christian Education to the school.

Robert Boodt, Chairman
Rocky Christian School
5204 - 54 Avenue
Rocky Mountain House, AB T4T 1S5
PHONE: (403)845-3516 FAX: (403)845-4370
E-mail: rcschool@telusplanet.net

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First Christian Reformed Church in Taber

Is seeking a full time youth pastor to direct and coordinate the various youth ministries of our church. We are a church that values our youth and desire that they enter into a warm and growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Position responsibilities also include participation in worship, building a leadership team, pastoral care and counselling, and supervision of the education ministry. If you see yourself meeting these needs in a growing rural congregation of 100 families and have academic qualifications and/or experience to make it all happen, then we would be pleased to hear from you! Send your resume to:

First CRC,
3902 Heritage Drive,
Taber, AB T1G 1A2

A church profile and further details are available on request. If you have any questions contact us at **(403) 223-2331, (403) 223-0790**
Fax (403) 223-0791, or e-mail Pastor Mike Vandyk at:
mvandyk@telusplanet.net

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Woodstock, ON N4V 1G1
Phone: (519) 539-2117

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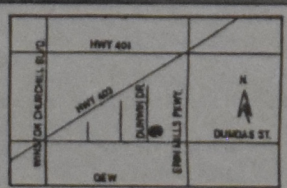


Mississauga, Dundas St. — 2 Blocks W. of Erin Mills Parkway (905) 828-9511

Job Opportunity

REDEEMER
University College

CHAPLAIN

Applications are invited for the full-time position of Chaplain, beginning August 2003. The Chaplain is responsible for providing pastoral care and spiritual leadership for the Redeemer community, with a particular emphasis on student needs.

Candidates for the position should have a mature Christian faith commitment; a deep sense of calling to ministry among university-age students; a good understanding of the nature of a liberal arts and sciences university rooted in the Reformed Christian tradition; experience in working with people of various cultures and Christian faith traditions; and a relevant masters degree, together with ordination or some other form of accountability to a denomination. (For further information, see www.redeemer.on.ca and check the Quick Links)

Interested applicants should submit a resume, three references and a three-page statement of their approach to campus ministry. The application deadline is February 28, 2003 or until the position is filled. Please direct applications to:

Chaplain Search Committee, Redeemer University College,
777 Garner Road East, Ancaster, ON, L9K 1J4
dvdban@redeemer.on.ca

Preference will be given to Canadian citizens and permanent residents.

News

Despite opposition, Christian ministry expands in Pakistan

Alan Doerksen

FORT ERIE, Ont. – Evangelism work has been difficult in Pakistan, especially since the war in neighboring Afghanistan started. But despite various kinds of opposition, Pakistan Gospel Assemblies (PGA) has managed to plant 2,000 churches, and is now reaching out through a variety of ministries such as traveling medical clinics, videos and audiotapes, with plans to start cable TV stations soon.

In November, Dr. William Johnson, founder of PGA, visited Canada, as a guest of the Christian Aid Mission, to speak to churches about what God is doing in Pakistan. "God has called me to plant churches," explains Johnson, who started PGA in 1974. "I planted 325 churches from 1974 to 1990."

'Do more'

Then came a dramatic turning point in his ministry. "The Lord appeared unto me in 1991 and showed me 50,000 communities without the gospel," says Johnson. "The Lord said, 'How far are you committed to take the gospel to these places?' I looked at that and said, 'I'm limited with my resources, and I can't take this target. But you know, Lord, I'm already doing something.' And three times he said, 'Do more, do more, do more.'

"So I said, 'Yes, I'm willing to do more. I'll take 10 per cent of that. Can I do that?' And he said, 'Yes, you take what you can.'"

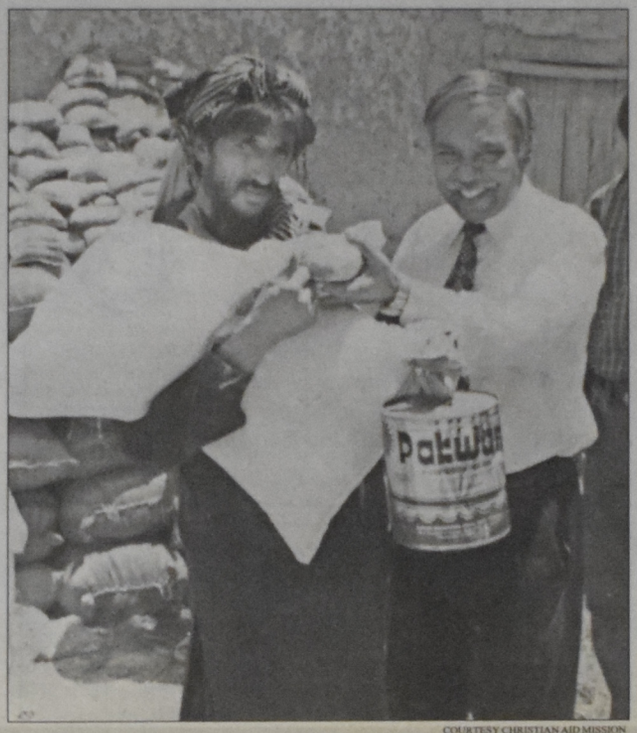
After that encounter, Johnson set a target for PGA to plant 5,000 churches. "I organized myself and speeded up my efforts." More recently, in 2000, PGA chose to focus more on planting house churches — an effective approach in Pakistan because of the persecution established churches face.

PGA's church planting has speeded up, and now the denomination has 2,000 churches and more than 100,000 church members.

To plant churches, PGA first conducts a three- to five-day crusade in a region, reaching people from five to 10 villages in the area, reports Christian Aid. Soon, house groups are gathering in each of these places.

Obstacles facing church

But evangelism is difficult work in Pakistan, Johnson tells *Christian Courier*. "Constitutionally, we are allowed to proclaim our faith." But even so, the Pakistani government has caused problems for churches. Years ago, he says, "the government nationalized Christian schools and colleges.... They crippled the Christian community in Pakistan." In the 1970s, the government passed a law banning foreign missionaries from coming to live in Pakistan. But although that door is now closed, Johnson notes that the door is still open for indigenous church leaders such as himself to work.



COURTESY CHRISTIAN AID MISSION

Dr. William Johnson helps distribute food to needy people in Pakistan.

Another obstacle facing the church is Pakistan's Islamic laws, such as the blasphemy law. "We are not allowed to say anything against Mohammed or the Islamic faith or the Koran," says Johnson. The penalty is death. "Many Christians have been killed, and many are in jails."

Other "problems and pressures we have are from extremist Islamic organizations," explains Johnson. "The government is forced by these organizations to make some laws."

War by America and its allies against Afghanistan has also had an adverse effect on Pakistan's Christian community. "Christians in Pakistan are paying the price of every attack America is [making] on Afghanistan," asserts Johnson. In fall 2001, "when Afghanistan was attacked, after that a church was attacked in Bahawalpur." Christians have also been attacked and killed in Karachi and Islamabad.

One of PGA's ministers was killed. "I had one minister who was shot by a person who was just a neighbor," reports Johnson. "In his own home, he killed him by his gun. It's terrible. They think it's easy to kill a Christian – like a dog."

Extremist Muslims "think to kill Christians and Jews is a blessing. They create persecution to the church and think it's a blessing to them.... They are trying to get the attention of the international media. They think it is more easy to persecute Christians and bring international media attention – so we are a target in that country.... We are all under that kind of threat," he asserts. Although "we bring a message of peace to them, they don't have a message of peace for us." But he adds, "God's mercy is keeping us in that situation."

New windows of opportunity

Despite opposition, PGA's churches and other ministries are growing. Pakistan allows no Christian radio or television. But PGA has gotten around this obstacle by producing videos and audiotapes. "The Holy Spirit led me to this window," explains Johnson. "Videos and tapes can be used in homes. People can be trained through these."

PGA is also planning to start up cable TV stations. "After 9-11, there were some limitations, but this door was opened," he says. The government has allowed private sector agencies to run cable TV stations. So, PGA is working on getting a license to run such stations. "Every station would require some fee. That's the area where we want to raise some more funds, so that we can have several stations."

In Pakistan, there is a great need for medical care. Most villages have little healthcare, and "70 per cent of people live in villages," Johnson reports. Although the government has opened some small clinics in villages, often unqualified people are put in charge of the clinics, after making "hidden plans with the officials."

Because of the poor healthcare facilities available in villages, "we felt this burden to have mobile clinic units," says Johnson. "Through these, we can help physically, and also those who are found seriously sick we can bring to the hospitals. We can love people, and preach the gospel, and evangelize through social action."

Healing sick, helping refugees

One doctor working with PGA "has established a School of Healings,"where she gives healthcare teaching, he reports. "Many miracles are taking place through the School of Healings. We are helping people through healthcare, medicines, and through prayers."

PGA is also ministering to Afghan refugees who have come to Pakistan. Johnson has traveled to Afghanistan a couple of times and says, "This country is closed to the gospel. Never have they allowed a missionary to come and establish a church. There is not a single church in that country." But God will reach Afghanistan in his time, says Johnson.

More than three million refugees have come to Pakistan, so PGA is able to reach out to them.

In 1997, Johnson established the PGA Mercy Operation, which brings relief to refugees, as well as orphans, disabled widows, and victims of persecution and disaster, according to Christian Aid.

"Through humanitarian aid projects, we can reach 20,000 families. We have in mind to be involved with the reconstruction of Afghanistan, for children's schooling, and in medical and agricultural [work]," says Johnson.

Johnson is married, with two sons and two daughters. "All my children are involved full-time in the ministry with me," says Johnson, with satisfaction. "That's a great help."

News Digest

Teddy bears from prison

MADISON, Wisconsin (AP) – The Madison Police Department got some help from an unexpected source after asking listeners of a local radio station to donate teddy bears for children. Some inmates at the Fox Lake Correctional Institution heard Officer Larry Kamholz's request on WNWC and decided to help.

The inmates donated $626 of their wages and bought the police department 2,000 surplus teddy bears with the help of local toy marketer US JHI Corp. Officers give the teddy bears to children to console them at crime or accident scenes.

"We're used to thinking of bad people in jail," Kamholz said. "But ... they can change their lives and make themselves better and give back to the community."

Bamboo bicycle

KANPUR, India – An Indian scientist has designed a bamboo cycle as an environmentally friendly form of transport.

D. P. Mishra, professor of aerospace engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, travels to the office on his bamboo bicycle which weighs just 8 kg. Most of the body of the cycle, including the stand and handle, is made of wood. The cycle also has a horn that blows like a flute, reports the *Times of India*.

Mishra said the idea behind his invention was to make it affordable for rural people who could manufacture it with material available in their villages. He adds it is more "nature-friendly" than traditional bicycles because the manufacturing process creates no pollution. The scientist is now planning to make further improvements to make his bicycle even lighter and more attractive.

Wing-walking

TORONTO – Last August, Dizzy Seales, an 88-year-old Briton with a wooden leg, set a new world age record for standing on the wing of a flying aircraft. In doing so, he eclipsed the record of an 87-year-old South African woman, reports the *Daily Telegraph*. Seales learned how to wing-walk as an air gunner during the Second World War, when he left the gun turret of his crippled Defiant night-fighter and walked across the wing to rescue his trapped pilot. That episode earned him his nickname, Dizzy.